

- WE LOOK AT 30 HOT GADGETS ◄◄
- WARHAMMER 40K: DAWN OF WAR REVIEW
 - **BURNOUT 3 SMASHING REVIEW 44**
 - THE HISTORY OF GTA
 - MORTAL KOMBAT: DECEPTION PREVIEW **
 - F.E.A.R. PREVIEW
 - THE ELDER SCROLLS IV FIRST LOOK
 - ZOO TYCOON 2 PREVIEW



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PlayStation。2



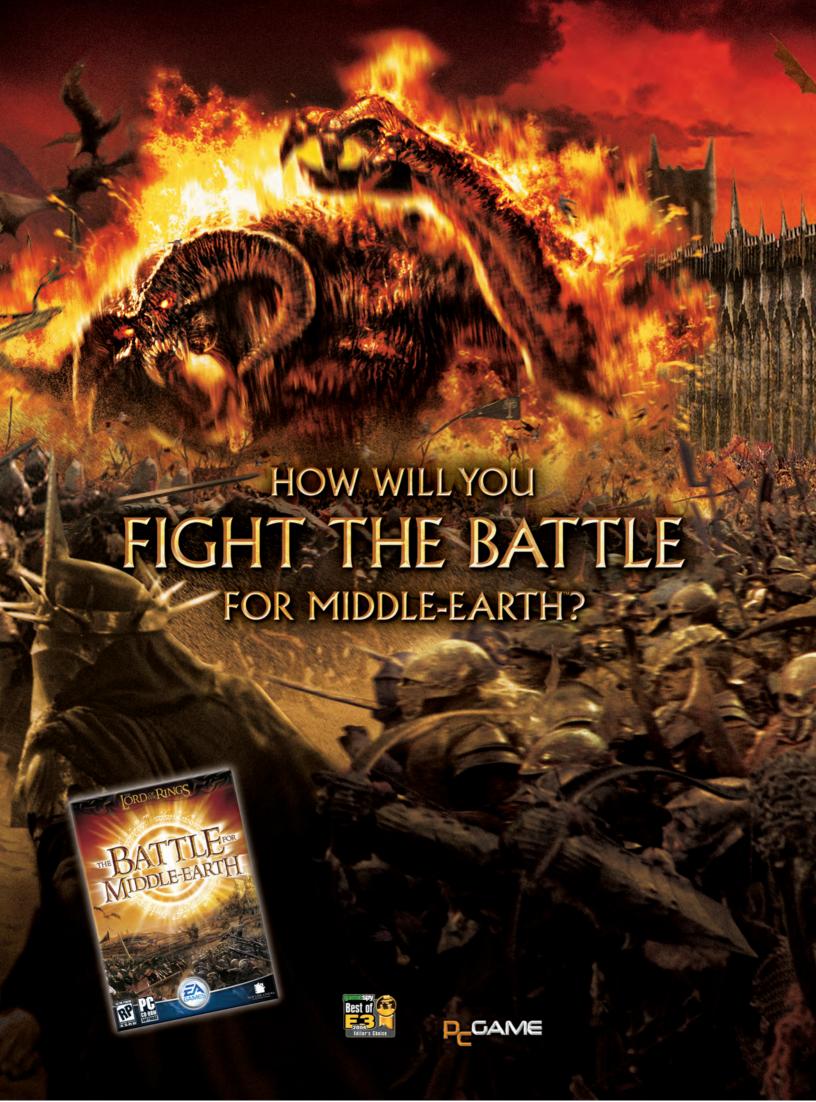
THIS WAS NOT THE END...



MEDAL OF HONOR PACIFIC ASSAULT

THE BATTLE BEGINS







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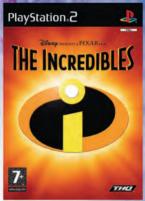
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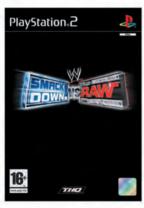












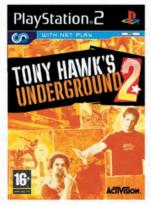
















fun, anyone? PlayStation 2 4.







Silver or Black DVD Remote



Silver or Black Duel Shock Controller



























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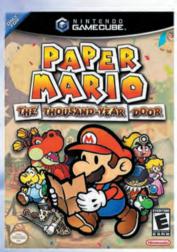


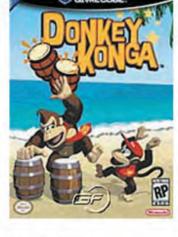




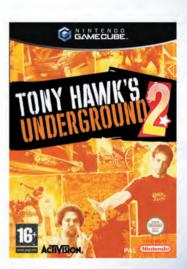














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Lifestyle: Comics

128 Lifestyle: Board Games & Strategy Guides

Lifestyle: URL

Retro: Legacy - Shiny Entertainment

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134 Game Over

FEATURES

22 Interview - Konami 32 rAge 2004

PREVIEWS

Preview Introduction

History of GTA

Mortal Combat Deception

The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion

52 54 56 58 Zoo Tycoon 2 Jak 3

Sid Meier's Pirates

F.E.A.R.

60 62

Joint Operations: Escalation

REVIEWS

Reviews Introduction

The Sims 2

Call of Duty: United Offensive Warhammer 40 000: Dawn of War

Burnout 3

Chessmaster 10

Shellshock: 'Nam '67

Soldner: Secret Wars Silent Hill 4: The Room

84 85

1945 | & ||

86 Wings of War 86

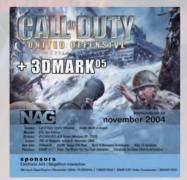
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Crisis Zone

Yu Gi Oh: The Duelists of the Roses

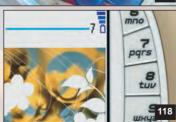
Ghostmaster

PC PS2 PC PC PS2 PS2 PC PC PS2



Demos Call of Duty: United Offensive | Shade: Wrath of Angels Movies GTA: San Andreas Drivers ATI CATALYST v4.9 Drivers [Windows XP - 2000 Anime .PDF LO Magazine: Volume 6 - November 2004 Add-Ons 3DMark05 | DOOM3 Viavga [DM Map] | Myst IV Revelation Screensaver | NAG CD Database Patches DOOM3 vl.I Other Other: The Matrix Has You Flash Animation | Cheatbook Database 2004 & All Updates





HARDWARE

Lazy Gamer's Guide: PStwo

Hardcor3 Roundup - Stocking Fillers Xpanel Multifunction Control Panel

Thermalright SP97 Athlon CPU Cooler

Motorola E398

Rockfire Windstorm Pro ASUS PSGD2 Premium Wireless Edition MoBo

Rockfire XForce Controller

SuperFlower Power Supply Hi Cool 3D Slot Fan

Silverstone Eudemon

HIS Excalibur X800XTPE VIVO 256MB IceQII AGP

ASUS Extreme EN5900 PCI Express

Aquacool External Liquid Cooling System

Gigabyte 3D Rocket CPU Cooler

Mecer Sigma 8 Premium Extreme System Philips 109B5 CRT With LightFrame

116 118 Nokia 7600

Motorola V80

Silverstone TJ-03 Case

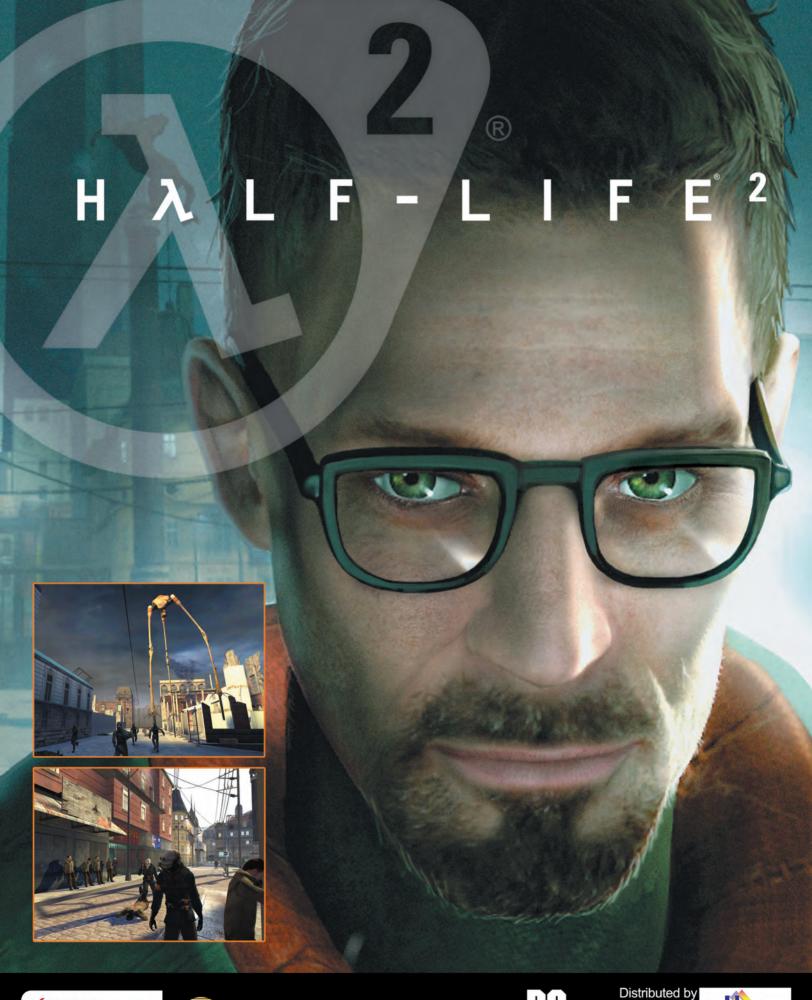
RockFire RacingStar Vibra Wheel

These few brave companies make the Cover CD a reality every month... Think fondly of them!





















double cover edition... again!

It's all going to unravel soon I tell you - if we keep this pace up impressing readers during the early part of 2005 is going to be next to impossible. Not only do we have two different covers this issue but inside each different edition we have the supporting posters. For example, if you buy the GTA magazine you get a GTA poster and if you buy the Mortal Kombat magazine you get a Mortal Kombat poster. There's no interesting story here this month about the magazine cover except for the fact that James was flown to London to gather material for the GTA feature on page 40. This is another South African exclusive so you can feel proud! Enjoy the posters...

don't really have anything smart to talk about this month · its information overload coupled with stressing during rAge and a deadline from hell as well as this fat magazine you're holding

in your hands [too many late nights]. In light of this I'll stick to news worthy topics as they're easier for my mind to cope with. It's also officially open season in the gaming industry and with so many excellent games arriving everyday in the office, keeping focused on actual work is impossible.

rAge 2004

rAge is starting to feel more like E3 - especially after the showing some of the exhibitors put together. How do I know this? Well at rAge this year there was alpha game code nobody in the NAG office had seen yet. The most important thing here however is that this 'event' grew this year in two areas - floor space and attendance. This gives me a clear indication that rAge is something everyone wants so keep your eyes open next year for an even better experience. Now that the marketing malarkey is done I'm going to use the rest of this paragraph to thank everyone involved in making rAge 2004 such an amazing experience - especially Sam and Lauren - your day at the health spa has been booked. Its always interesting to note that every single person from the guy delivering a replacement bolt to the event manager are all critical to the success and it's good to know that there are so many competent people willing to believe in a cool idea like rAge.

Feel good message

I respect karma, I respect Murphy and I respect vin and yang. If you zoom in really close and shine a spotlight in my face - I fear them. It goes deeper than a fear of the law because the consequences are much worse. The last laboured metaphor looks like this, if you crack open my skull the intricate [or basic, depending on who you ask] device inside makes all its decisions grounded in this fundamental root karmic fear. I believe that if I swindle someone out of a gram of platinum somewhere down the line I'll find I'm short a gram of my own. If you move away from all the religious and new age connotations linking karma, Murphy's laws and Chinese philosophy, you're left with simple universal energy and the balance that must be maintained. The reason for all this sprouting is ironically because of it. I want to sing praises but out of this respect for the balance of things I'm simply loading the dice in my favour. If I've lost you just read from here and don't worry about the stuff above. This issue is remarkable for a few reasons. It's the biggest NAG we've ever unleashed on the game playing

Making a difference...

public and will be bought by more of you than ever before. The reason for all this is you, the reader and before you think this is just another bum lick editorial from an ever grateful Editor to the undeserving readers - it's not. NAG is experiencing success after success because of you and what this means is that the unique system in place here is working amazingly well - despite the extreme odds. Our clients are both the readers and the advertisers, forcing us to produce a product that must satisfy both and because we're what you might loosely describe as a niche market publication, this is especially hard to achieve without selling out to advertising pressure or becoming too hardcore to benefit anyone.

How we manage this balance is a mystery to everyone, especially us - perhaps we should just be happy with, "it's your destiny". The important part is that NAG is empowering the industry because we're reaching more people with each passing month and changing those people to informed buyers and in turn these informed buyers are spending money with our advertisers [directly and indirectly], and amazingly enough this whole concocted theory of advertising and sales is actually working in this country because the gaming industry and more directly the specialist hardware sector is growing and growing and the evidence is sitting here in your hands, NAG - the biggest and fastest growing local technology entertainment publication on the shelf. Its shameless trumpet blowing I know but it's important that you know your money and your decision making processes are making a quantifiable difference in this country. No longer are people whining about piracy and the fact that you can't buy any of the cool cases anymore, piracy is being replaced by legitimate legal software and you can buy pretty much buy anything hardware related that's available to the rest of the world. Also, don't forget that we can even put on a successful gaming expo without having to invite planeloads of snooty arrogant gaming journalists. The growth of NAG is a clear indication of the state of the gaming industry, specialist hardware growth and the supplemental market in South Africa and this is very good news for everyone involved - you know I might even take down that picture of the new M3 and replace it with a Ferrari or have I gone too far now? Besides I've almost given up hope of a BMW advert in NAG even though a large number of gamers I know drive expensive German cars. If this karma stuff seems a little weird for a gaming magazine then make sure you get the next issue when I try mixing all the coloured pills in the medicine cabinet together.

Michael James [Editor]

Caption of the Month

Each month we'll select a screenshot from one of the games in the issue and write a funny caption for it, well... we'll try and make it funny...

Your job is to see if you can come up with an even funnier caption and send it to: ed@nag.co.za
Subject: November Caption

f you use the wrong subject in your e-mail it'll get deleted...

Your prize: Our sponsor for the screenshot of the month competition is Vivendi Universal Games. They said they'll give us

something interesting each month... if we don't want it we'll be sure to send it along to the winner mentioned under this block of text



NAG's November Caption



'Hey... <insert termite joke>' - NAG's [69.2% lame] effort

September winner



"Darn! Looks like Frik pierced the wors again" -Heston Hoffman









Specification
Intel P4 3.1 GHz 512KB
Gigabyte GA-8SG800 Motherboard
NVIDIA GeForce4 Ti 4200 with AGP8X
AOpen A90E 19" Monitor | TwinMOS 1GB RAM DDR 266
Seagate Barracuda 80GB | AOpen CD ROM
AOpen Tower Chassis | Logitech Cordless Desktop



Yuppie & AV Edition

XC cube - Yuppie

Compact aluminum chassis 220W power supply Intel 865G / nForce2GT chipset, Support P4 / AMD K7 Support Dual DDR400 Front USB & Audio 1394, S/PDIF support



XC cube - AV Edition

Compact aluminum chassis Intel 865G chipset, Support P4 800MHz; Front USB & Audio & 1394, & S/PDIF support Support Dual DDR400 Built-in TV card / FM Tuner & Remote Control



SPECIFICATIONS:

		EX65PE	EX65	EX18
5.77	TYPE	Intel P4/Celeron	Intel P4/Celeron	AMD K7
CPU	FSB	400/533/800	400/533/800	200/266/333
CHIPSET		Intel 865PE / ICH5	Intel 865PE / ICH5	nForce2-GT/MCP-T
VGA		None	8X AGP (OnDie)	8X AGP (OnDie)
SOUND		AC97 5.1	AC97 5.1	AC97 5.1
LAN		10/100/1000	10/100/1000	10/100/1000
SATA		2	2	None
USB2.0		2	2	2
IEEE1394		2	2	1
DIMENSI	ONS	300(L) x 200(W) x 185(H)mm	300(L) x 200(W) x 185(H)mm	300(L) x 200(VV) x 185(H)mm

Avatars - personifying the human god

words james francis

A recent adjustment to the NAG forums gave me a quick refresher course in the nature of the web and its power of personification. I've long known about our ability to concentrate essences of our id's, fears and desires into online personalities, but it's always good to revisit this realization.

Basically, if someone says so-and-so is such an ass online, it's really an unfair statement, because we're only getting one piece of the entire toy. That why we call it an avatar: it's a personification of God, according to many Eastern religions - a part of the real essence of the being. It also has a positive aspect to it, especially when I look at Robbie Cooper's Alter Ego exhibition, a London-based photo show sponsored by PlayStation aimed at showing how people represent themselves. He took photos of 30 people and placed them next to their captured poses of their MMOG characters; a nice reflection of how they differ and what they share with their digital presence. Take for instance Jason, a boy with muscular dystrophy - he expresses himself differently through a Boba Fett-like character in Star Wars Galaxies called Bladerunner, clad in silver armour and a menacing mask. Chalmaine's online character's good looks earned her a centre-fold spot in a recent game magazine, but in real life she's a middle-age mom with two kids. We all tend to forget that who we encounter online is but a segment of who that person really is and it's easy to make crack judgments based on your conduct with them. Of course, like all things we do, emotions do play a role and come through quite raw, mainly because they exist regardless - our personalities just control the intensity that they surface with. And when it comes to such a channelling environment like the online world, things tend to have fewer hurdles to bound over before reaching their destination. In other words, it's a lot easier to be angry or infatuated with someone online than in the real world. Perhaps that's the real appeal. Some might say that the mechanic nature of the web makes things cold and isolated, but I think we have a chance to explore people in a less diluted way. Just remember two things: that's a person on the other side as well and anything said online should be taken with a pinch of salt.

Superman Online

City of Heroes players honour Christopher Reeves

With the world mourning the passing of Christopher Reeves, best known for his role as Superman in the 1978 movie, players of popular MMORPG City of Heroes held a memorial for the actor. With all attending characters dressed full-lad in superhero attire, some even sporting Superman outfits, the group saluted Reeves, who passed away on Monday the 11th of October after suffering heart problems. These stemmed from an infection caused by his paralyses - Reeves was paralysed from the neck down after a horse-riding injury in 1995 and has since become well known for championing causes concerning paraplegics and research into spinal chord injuries, including the controversial stem cell research. He was 52 years old.



Midway confirms movie and game title Get down in da hood yo all

Midway is at work on a gang-based action adventure title for PlayStation 2 and Xbox, titled Fear & Respect. The game will include unarmed combat as well as gunplay, and a reputation system that tracks how non-player characters view a player's persona. Release of Fear & Respect is scheduled for late next year. Midway have also confirmed that an agreement with Paramount Pictures has been signed to make a movie. The movie will be produced by Christine Peters with writer/director John Singleton collaborating on the game.





THQ gets Juiced

The hardcore street racer finds a home

When Acclaim recently entered Chapter 7 bankruptcy, which means all assets could be sold to pay back creditors, a lot of doubt was cast on its future titles, most notably the street racer Juiced, which has shaped up very nicely (except for the terrible demos) and caused a lot of positive noise around the NAG desks when we received playable code. The game wasn't totally affected by Acclaim's downfall since the actual title is owned by the developers, Juiced Games, and the company that financed most of the project -

Fund4Games. The subsequent search for a publisher has caused a lot of rumours, including a possible rush out for the December season, and names like Microsoft being thrown around.

Now THQ has announced that Juiced is part of its catalogue, having signed a publishing deal with the developers. It also nets Acclaim a very vital \$10.7 million, the amount THQ ended up paying for having the winning bid, but the game is worth it. As a result Juiced has been delayed to mid 2005 as the publisher looks the code over and helps iron out some of those bugs we've encountered.

"There can be only one!"

Who isn't familiar with this famous quote from the 1986 film Highlander? The intellectual property has since grown to include further films, a television series and various spin-off products. It is actually quite surprising that no major game based on the concept has previously been attempted. SCi and Davis Panzer Productions recently signed a deal that will address this situation. Will their offering turn out to be Immortal?

Microsoft and Sony eye Korea 10% global market at stake

Microsoft and Sony are both embroiled in a console war over Korea, estimated to make up around 10% of the world's gaming market. The territory is considered important, since it would serve as a beachhead for building a stronger footing in the lucrative Asian market. Microsoft's main assault so far comes in the Sejoon Game World, an Xbox-powered arcade sizing at 4,600 square meters and worth around \$4.4 million. The Redmond software company also recently sent a contingent of senior marketing managers to the subsidiary to spur growth - a first in Microsoft's history. "The Korean market is increasingly regarded as crucial for Microsoft officials working for Xbox, because it's the beachhead for entering China and other Asian markets," said Cho Hyuk, PR manager of Microsoft Korea's home and entertainment division.



I'm going to go out on a limb here and then start sawing the branch behind me. I am a gamer. A true, full blooded Google-definition gamer. Want to know why? Aside from owning a GameCube and a PlayStation 2. I just blew my entire salary buying the last of the next-generation consoles, an Xbox. But that's not enough, no. I've also just put myself into bankruptcy by purchasing an old console, the Sega Saturn. Why would I do this? Because I want the Saturn, I want the Xbox and I want the gaming experiences my consoles give me.

What makes a man like me spend so much money on games and consoles? Interestingly enough, I don't spend as much money on computer goods. While the computer may arouably (and factually falsely) be the 'better' gaming rig, it is not the originator and nor is it the cultivator. Gaming comes from consoles. It came from the 8-bit era of Italian plumbers and even further back, from a lit dot bouncing off two parallel lines players controlled using little dials. The console is the bastion of the old school and now, the new school. The Xbox and PS2 don't share the gaming world with the Personal Computer; they dominate it in the mainstream. PC gaming is becoming the niche while the once elite console market has become as common as pop culture and trendy clichés.

I buy consoles because I want to get my game on and there simply is no better place for it, than on consoles. Yes, the computer is the main e-sport platform, but I'm not here to play sports. I'm here to play games. I don't want gaming to produce sponsor-able teams; I don't want major corporations branding clans.

I spend money on consoles to get exactly what I want. Games, gaming and vague halcyon youthful reminiscing.



Pacific Fighters

Ubisoft's combat flight simulator Pacific Fighters boasts impressive multiplayer capabilities: 128 players in dogfight mode, allowing the staging of large-scale aerial battles, and up to 32 players in cooperative and dynamic online campaigns.



Shining Tears

Sega fans are shedding tears of joy

In May next year, Sega will release Shining Tears for the PlayStation 2. This latest in the company's Shining series will be an action role-playing game featuring real-time battles, escalating weaponry, a rotating cast of characters and cooperative multiplayer options, and will take the franchise in a new direction. "SEGA development has created a game with a distinct handdrawn look that will resonate with anime enthusiasts and fans of the Shining series," said Scott. A. Steinberg, Vice President of Entertainment Marketing, SEGA of America, Inc.





Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion

Under construction since 2002, Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion was recently officially announced. Bethesda Softworks is crafting this one for PC and "future generation" consoles" - such as the PlayStation 3, perhaps? Elder Scrolls IV will combine freeform gameplay with cutting-edge graphics.







HD-DVD for Xbox **Next**²

NEC and Toshiba want new format on next console

A manager at NEC recently revealed at the CEATAC Japan technology expo that the company is trying to convince Microsoft using the HD-DVD format is the way to go with the Xbox successor. And in an interview with Toshiba president Tadashi Okamura, he also revealed that they would like to see Microsoft adopt the format. Though the two companies' campaigns are not related, they are strong proponents for HD-DVD (High Definition DVD), the competitor to Sony's Blue Ray to replace DVD technology. Blue Ray will be used in the PlayStation 3. NEC also revealed that to push adoption of the technology, they plan to soon start releasing their machines with HD-DVD drives instead of normal DVD ones. Microsoft haven't said anything other than that they won't comment on specifics of the next system. The company is expected to unveil the Xbox Next at next year's E3.

Compilation of Final Fantasy VII

Square Enix is engaged in a project called Compilation of Final Fantasy VII, a set of FF-VII spin-offs including a console game titled Dirge of Cerberus: Final Fantasy VII, a mobile role-playing game entitled Before Crisis: Final Fantasy VII and a direct-to-DVD film by the name of Final Fantasy VII Advent Children. An unusual aspect of the mobile title is the fact that it will make use of a phone's digital camera as part of its control interface. This new collection from Square reflects the company's move toward "polymorphic content", allowing exposure of intellectual properties through various media.



Battle.net alternatives ruled illegal **Blizzard wins** court case

Blizzard Entertainment have won a court case against members of the BnetD Project, software that emulates Battle.net servers. A federal court in St. Louis found the project guilty of violating Blizzard's End User License Agreement (EULA) and Battle.Net Terms of Use (TOU), as well as the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) for the circumvention and distribution of circumventing antipiracy technology. The judge ruled that the reverse engineering of the software violated the EULA and TOU while creating a functional alternative to Battle.net violated the DMCA. "We consider this ruling to be a major victory against software piracy," stated Mike Morhaime, president and cofounder of Blizzard Entertainment. "By ruling in our favour on every count, the court is sending a clear message that creating unauthorized servers which emulate Blizzard's Battle.net servers is without question illegal. We have worked hard to provide gamers with a free, safe, secure, reliable environment on Battle.net. and this ruling is a strong validation that we are justified in protecting and ensuring the integrity of our game service." The developer of games such as WarCraft, Diablo and StarCraft have always kept a tight control over their software with the intentions to prevent piracy and fake serial keys, often mass banning users for using fraudulent keys



and software.





Constantine

Take a supernatural trip to the dregs and depths of this demonic world

This third-person action game will chronicle the exploits of John Constantine, the main character in the Hellblazer graphic novels, also to appear in film form in the not-too-distant future. Constantine has literally been to hell and back, and his adventures take place in Los Angeles, with angels and demons warring upon each other behind the scenes. The game, in development at Bits Studios, will be published by SCi for PlayStation 2 and Xbox next February.

EA plans to open a development studio in China. The 500-strong team will develop games for the Chinese market, based on current EA games, in hopes to capture more of the country's online gaming market, valued to be worth \$622 million in 2007.

3D Realms has chosen Megon as the provider of the physics engine for the upcoming Duke Nukem Forever (which has, so far, taken forever!) The engine simulates characters and vehicles as well as rigid body dynamics, and was chosen largely for its ease of use.

For the fourth time in a decade the Writers Guild of America have expanded their membership by launching a new media caucus for Game Script writers.

After its showing at the Tokyo Games Show, analysts are worried that the PlayStation Portable will not be ready for the Japanese launch and fear the US launch could be pushed back as far as November 2005.

Bioware has licensed the Unreal 3 engine, but the Knights of the Old Republic developer isn't saying what it is working on, except that it's a new RPG.

At the recent Tokyo Game Show, Sony revealed upcoming titles. Among them is Wanda to Kyozou, which translates to Wanda and the Colossus, which draws much in terms of style from ICO, and is being developed by the same team. Another title expected next year is Genji, set in 1159 in feudal Japan.

Addressing the House of Commons, Tony Blair lauded the age rating used for video games, calling it a "strong system". He added that responsible adults have a right to watch what they want, but children should be pro-

Eidos recently announced that the company will definitely be extending its Deus Ex and Thief franchises. Upcoming games will be designed with the mass market in mind. Little was said about Deus Ex 3, but it is known that Eidos intends to modernize the Thief world. Eidos further stated that all platforms will be supported by its future games.

Nintendo's upcoming DS handheld console will support external microphones and microphone-bearing headsets. This will result in higher audio fidelity in voice-using applications. This further means vocal control of games, which is to be featured in some DS games, will be more viable and reliable than by sole means of the handheld's internal microphone.

A company in Silicon Valley claims they have software that can emulate Xbox games on the Xbox Next. Called Quicktransit, it apparently allows for software to run transparently across platforms. Microsoft haven't commented on the report.

Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory evolves multiplay

UbiSoft's latest Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell project will include some innovative multiplayer game modes. In cooperative play, pairs of operatives are required to work together to perform tasks and manoeuvres impossible to execute solo, in order to accomplish predominantly infiltration-based goals. This mode will feature AI stimulus-response, including shadow detection. Additionally, a cooperative knife challenge mode will add a new level of difficulty for veteran players. The versus mode also features teamwork, and is interesting in that it offers two classes, one of which is played in the first person, while the other is controlled in the third. Well-rounded teams will result in good infiltration capabilities coupled with a strong defence from the same.





Another game adopts the EyeToy

This is Football 2005, from Sony, will make use of the EyeToy camera accessory for the PlayStation 2. At present, only one function has been confirmed, and not a particularly revolutionary one players will be able to apply their likenesses to player characters. However, it is rumoured that the game may also feature "video-phone" functionality, allowing players to see each other while playing.

Swedish military adopts Battlefield

MODERN DAY BATTI FFIFI D SIMULATION PROVES USEFUL IN REAL LIFE

AerotechTelub has acquired development rights to use the technology behind Battlefield 2 to create training material for the Swedish military. Digital Illusions, developers of the game, licensed the engine to this company because, given that it is not involved in the game industry, it won't exert competitive pressure against them. The Battlefield 2 technology was chosen because it enables simulation of large geographical areas. Battlefield 2 itself is scheduled for release before the middle of next year.







The Legend of Zelda: The Minish Cap adventure game will require players to change their size (thanks to the Minish Cap, a magical item of headwear) between normal and minute, and will present puzzles that need to be solved in order to advance. A Zelda Limited Edition Pak will also be released simultaneously, which will include the game and a Zelda-themed Game Boy Advance SP that will only be available in this package.



Front Mission 5

Square Enix has revealed that its 6th development division is at work on Front Mission 5 for the PlayStation 2. No concrete details about this strategy title have been released as yet, and given how meticulous Square Enix tends to be in this regard, the game must be in a very early development stage. It is, however, known that a mobile version is also being developed, to run on the NTT Docomo 900i series of phones. Furthermore, the first public phase of beta testing for Front Mission Online for PC and PlayStation 2 has just commenced. It seems this property is getting much attention from the company.







Shamed from their homeland, pursuit of their own, united by destiny, a Fighter, a Sorcerer and a Rogue. In a land of mystery & enchantment, they must find the Demon Stone and recapture the warring leaders before the Realms are doomed forever.

AT从RI



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Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory delayed

Ubisoft's upcoming release of Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory has been delayed to March next year for all versions of the game. The company cited marketing considerations as the reason for the delay.



Gran Turismo 4 redefined Polyphony Digital has dropped online capabilities from its upcoming Gran Turismo 4 in order to have it ready by Christmas. A further Gran Turismo title featuring online play has been provisionally scheduled for next year.

Australian developer KaWoW! and publisher Octagon Entertainment expect to have The Unseelie ready for the PC by the end of next year. This first-person shooter contains elements drawn from Celtic mythology, and will feature many role-playing aspects, including the accumulation of experience in order to advance skills.



Doom movie cast grows

More people to help cook The Rock

Game movies remain a hit and miss affair as the Resident Evil sequel gets mixed responses at the box office. The Doom movie project might have been around longer than the development time for Duke Nukem 3D, but it recently gathered momentum again when production kicked off in Prague. Around the time Doom 3 was released, they already had New Line Cinema backing the project and The Rock on board to play Sarge. Now the cast is joined by Karl Urban, who is apparently best known for playing Eomer, the breakaway leader of the Riders Of Rohan - you know, that guy. And to add to the drama, as he fights demons and other hell spawn, he'll come in contact with the organization who caused his parents death, with the token babe in the movie being played by Rosamund Pike.

Our faith is further strengthened by Cradle to the Grave director Andrzej Bartkowiak joining the team. So in other words not a lot and we wonder if we'll see Doom crash like Mario Bros and Street Fighter. The movie is scheduled for release in the US on August 5 2005, the one year anniversary of Doom 3.

Web Scores

	[PC]	[PC]	[PC]	[PC]
	The Sims 2	Warhammer: DOW	Call of Duty: UO	Chessmaster 10
NAG [100]	91	86	81	90
gamespy.com [5]	5	4.5	3.5	n/r
gamespot.com [10]	8.9	8.8	8.9	7.8
pc.ign.com [10]	9.4	8.8	8.4	8.4
	[PS2]	[PS2]	[PS2]	[PS2]
	Burnout 3	Silent Hill 4	Crisis Zone	Ghostmaster
NAG [100]	92	69	66	64
gamespy.com [5]	5	4	n/r	n/r
gamespot.com [10]	9.5	7.9	n/r	n/r
gamespot.com [10] ign.com [10]	9.5 9.4	7.9 8	n/r 5	n/r n/r











Star Trek online game

How much to be Seven?

Perpetual Entertainment has secured rights to develop a massively multiplayer game set in the Star Trek universe. The game will feature single- and multiplayer action in space, on starbases and on planets. The game is still in very early stages of development, with a current estimated release date of 2007. http://gaming.startrek.com

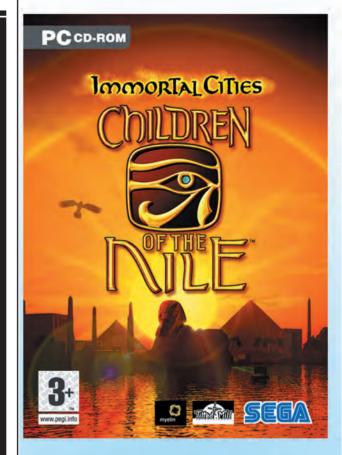


Square Enix has started promoting a game entitled Fantasy Earth: The Ring of Dominion, an upcoming massively-multiplayer role-playing game. At present very little is known about this project.

Elite IV in the works

The master himself is back

Officially, development of this title began in 2000, although many of the tools and technologies required have been created in the course of making other games before and since. Originally it was intended to be a massively multiplayer online game, but limitations in communications technology was one of the factors that persuaded the makers to rather opt for a game that can be played solo or with up to 16 or 32 players. Braben (the creator of the original Elite, among other titles) appears to be focusing predominantly on faithfully recreating interpersonal and crowd dynamics to power nonplayer characters - a tall order indeed. The game is currently still at least two years away. Braben revealed that a massively multiplayer version might then be released thereafter - the design is already there.



Awaits

From the lead designer of Million Unit Selling PHARAOH history's captivating civilization most awakes as strategic city building and societal simulation converge to create a groundbreaking experience in a stunning 3D environment. You are Pharaoh, supreme ruler of Egypt. Your leadership will determine a people's destiny and establish a legacy for eternity.



over Steam, Valve's proprietary online distribution system. But it all started back in 2002 when Valve served their then-published Sierra Online (later to become Sierra Entertainment under the Vivendi umbrella) with a lawsuit for Sierra's distribution of Valve games to cyber-cafes, apparently in violation with the agreement between the two companies.

Valve and Vivendi go to court, again

This kick-started numerous claims, motions, counter-claims and declarations, recently joined by another case from Vivendi, saying that Gabe Newell, Valve founder and president, misled the publisher with comments made during 2001 contract negotiations. This includes Steam, which Vivendi says they were lead to believe would play a much smaller role than it is and that Valve was going to join Vivendi and Sierra in using retail as the main distribution outlet. Of course, Sierra's initial advance for delivering the original Half-Life was only a laughable \$800,000.

It's not clear if this will delay Half-Life 2 once again - advance reviews have already started to appear and Valve has delivered a release candidate to Vivendi, but it looks like the problems hampering the title's release are far from gone.



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International Release Dates

PS₂

PS₂

PS₂

PS₂

GCN

GBA

PS2

PS₂

PC

PS₂

PS₂

Xbox

PS₂

Xbox

PS₂

PC

PC

PS₂

PC

PC

PC

GCN

PC

PC

GCN

PS2

PC

GBA

PC

PC

PC

PS2 | Xbox

PS2 | Xbox

PC | Xbox

PC | Xbox

PS2 | Xbox

| PS2 | Xbox

PS2 | Xbox

GCN | PS2 | Xbox RPG

GBA | GCN | PS2 | PC | Xbox Racing

GBA | GCN | PS2 | Xbox Simulation



Conflict: Vietnam
Dancing Stage Fusion
Dragon Empires
Gary Grigsby's World at War
Heroes of the Pacific
Immortal Cities: Children of the Nile
SingStar Party
Yu-Gi-Oh! Power of Chaos: Yugi the Destiny
Alexander
ATV Offroad Fury 3
Axis & Allies RTS

Godzilla: Save the Earth

Guilty Gear Isuka



Fighting

Shooter

Fighting

Platformer

Platformer

Wrestling

Racing

Action

Action

Shooter

Sports

Shooter

Shooter

Wrestling

Flight

Action

Shooter

Racing

Action

Strategy

Shooter

Fighting

Fighting

Action

Shooter

Action

Action

Strategy

Adventure

Simulation

RPG

RPG

Platformer

Strategy

11/02/2004

11/02/2004

11/02/2004

11/02/2004

11/02/2004

11/02/2004

11/02/2004

11/04/2004

11/04/2004

11/08/2004

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11/09/2004

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11/16/2004

11/16/2004

11/16/2004

11/16/2004

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11/17/2004

11/17/2004



King of Fighters 02/03 Ratchet and Clank: Up Your Arsenal Spyro: A Hero's Tail

The Lord of the Rings: The Third Age WWE SmackDown! vs. RAW

FlatOut

Killzone

Sudden Strike: Resource War Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex Need for Speed Underground 2

EyeToy: AntiGrav

Greg Hastings' Tournament Paintball Gretzky NHL 2005

Halo 2

Jak 3

Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault **Pacific Fighters**

Rumble Roses The Urbz: Sims in the City

Dungeon Lords

Painkiller: Battle Out of Hell

Crash 'n' Burn EverQuest II

Metroid Prime 2 Echoes

The Lord of the Rings: The Battle for Middle-earth

World of Warcraft Call of Duty: Finest Hour Dragon Ball Z Budokai 3

Fight Club

Forgotten Realms: Demon Stone Joint Ops: Escalation

King Arthur

Prince of Persia: Warrior Within

Sid Meier's Pirates!

The Legend of Zelda: The Minish Cap

Zoo Tycoon 2

GoldenEye: Rogue Agent Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater

Viewtiful Joe 2 Armies of Exigo

Second Sight

Shadowbane: Throne of Oblivion Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon 2

GCN | PS2 | Xbox PS₂ CN PS2 PC

GCN | PS2 | Xbox

GCN | PC | Xbox | PS2

Shooter Action **Fighting**

RPG

Shooter

11/18/2004 Strategy 11/30/2004 11/30/2004 Action

11/30/2004 11/30/2004











Bytes from South Korea

by malthew lowry

et's be honest, human beings were not designed to sit in front of computer screens, clicking away for hours on end. ■ It's just not natural, and may be detrimental to your health, (and I'm not talking about eye strain, backache or carpal-tunnel syndrome).

A case in point. Kim Kyung-jae was a 24 year old Korean male who collapsed and died after playing games at an internet cafe for 86 hours straight. He only left the computer to occasionally use the toilet and to

This was a big news item over here, and has raised many questions about web reliance or addiction in South Korea.

On the one hand, the Korean Government has made efforts to promote the country as an IT leader, but they have also been forced to address the problem of internet dependency by the creation of the Centre for Internet Addiction, Prevention and Counselling, Personally, the thought of a nation attached at the hip to their computers seems a better option than teens running around with needles stuck in their arms, but I suppose the lesser of two evils nonetheless remains an evil.

The reasons for this growing problem are complex and varied, but I have recently come across an interesting comparison between gaming in Korea and in Japan.

"Korea Unmasked" is not only a useful book for first-time visitors to Korea but is also a great read for an inquisitive mind. Written and illustrated by Won-bok RHIE, this comic strip-style book delves into Korean economics, society and culture, all in a concise, illustrated manner. His thoughts on gaming caught my attention.

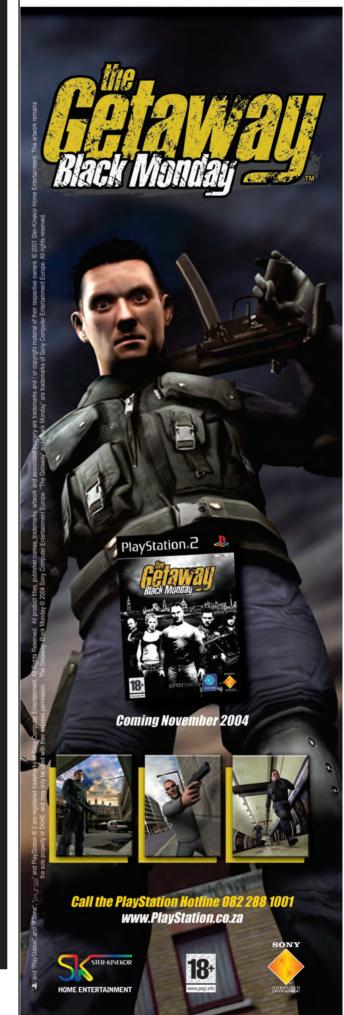
Koreans tend to favour human contact, much more so than do the Japanese, who avoid physical contact. He goes on to explain how the Japanese, as a result of this cultural constraint, have taken to playing console games, as opposed to the Korean gaming community, who are more comfortable playing online with PCs, or at internet cafes (PC Bangs) with friends.

This has resulted in Korea leading the way in Asia, (if not the world), with regards online gaming, while he suggests that Japan is the most advanced country in the world when it comes to the creation of games that can be played alone, or single player games.

In spite of the problem of rising web-related addictions, Korea is still at the forefront of computer gaming, and anyone serious about developing gaming in their country could take a page from South Korea's gaming book.

PlayStation_®2







"WHETHER YOU SEE THE MONSTERS OR NOT SHOULD DEPEND ON A MAN'S HEART"

MASASHI TSUBOYAMA, KONAMI JAPAN

MASASHI TSUBOYAMA AND AKIRA YAMAOKA

Konami Japan



hen it comes to the survival horror genre one series has become synonymous with psychological scares. Forget the lumbering zombies of Resident Evil, welcome to Silent Hill. Dark, menacing and - at times - just plain nasty, these games disturb on many levels. But you have to wonder what drives someone to create stone statues that leak blood, mutant babies or two-headed undead dogs.

"We have to admit that to create psychological games is actually quite difficult," says designer Masashi Tsuboyama. "There's a lot of thinking involved but it's worth it. Inspiration requires constant reflective thinking, it doesn't just come out. With lots of things around you and with that constant thinking, anything can be done. Although creating psychological fear is what we do, at the same time we feel that using direct scare elements is a much more direct way to appeal to the user because you get the reaction right away. With psychological fear, it just doesn't work that way. You have to look at the details extremely closely. It really is hard work."

The entire genre has been shifting of late, with the latest offering in the Resident Evil series doing away with its trademark zombies and introducing lunatic villagers and a host of other monsters. In a similar fashion, the latest game in the Silent Hill series - Silent Hill 4: The Room - takes a change in direction. Instead of featuring the sprawling town of Silent Hill as in the last three games, the action takes place inside a single room that houses portals to sub-worlds.

"The idea came when we wanted to make a sequel title after Silent Hill 3 that would implement a lot of new tastes," explains Tsuboyama. "This is why we chose the single room idea - it would really show the contrast between the normal and the abnormal. For the scenario, we got the inspiration from a book called Coin Locker Babies [Rvu Murakami's twisted adventure of two teenagers in Tokyo]."

Konami will be hoping that such a dark influence will help it to recreate the success that it achieved with the second game, Silent Hill 2: Restless Dreams. "Silent Hill 2 was easily our favourite in the series," the designers agree. "It had something that no other title around at that time had. It wasn't just a bunch of monsters coming in and the player having to fight them. It had a much more complex scenario than the others. Action-wise it may not have been that

satisfying, but overall it's the title we were most pleased with 1

Of course, violence in videogames is increasingly frowned upon and the survival horror genre is one of the main offenders when it comes to using controversial content as a means of luring its audience "You could say it's both creative and a means of promotion," comments Yamaoka, "But it's more to do with the creative side. You may say it's a level of violence, but we don't see it as violence because it isn't to us. When you're dealing with a horror title, it just has to be expressed that way." Regardless of whether the developers believe they are not deliberately creating violent games, restraints on studios are being tightened all the time, and scenes and sections of games are being cut.

"We almost got everything we wanted included in the games," Tsuboyama says, though they ran into trouble with Silent Hill 4... "Some elements and some of the creatures weren't allowed to appear outside in the real world," Tsuboyama explains. "The two-headed creatures, for instance - this generally wasn't well accepted by the public, so we had to make sure they only appeared in certain areas." "There were actually quite a few more scenes like that," adds Yamaoka. "If we could have implemented them as a work of art we could have used them and we were certain that the value of Silent Hill 4 would have been increased."

So with a changing genre to work with, where do the men behind the scenes see themselves taking the series from here? "We know that we have lots of fans out there and we think about these fans, what they expect from us and what they'd enjoy," says Yamaoka. "We'll certainly be doing something different for the next game from what we have dealt with this time, a completely different theme maybe - it might not even be a horror title."

community.za/news







Player of the Month

Name: Hendrik Anhäuser

Nick: n00b Age: 22

Occupation: Software Developer and Student

Clan: eoe

Games: Quake 3 Arena, Doom 3, StarCraft: BroodWar

Quote: "Humiliation!!!"

Achievements:

- German Quake 3 Team Captain at ESWC 2004
- 5th place at ESWC 2004
- 2nd place in the ESL Premiership Quake 3 TDM, 2004
- 2nd place in Clanbase Spring League Quake 3 TDM, 2004
- 3rd place at the Arena 77 Doom 3 Launch Party, 2004
- 1st place in the Clanbase Eurocup Quake 3 CTF, 2002 / 2003
- 1st place in the Q3Liga CUP Quake 3 CTF 2003
- 2nd place in the Q3Liga CUP Quake 3 CTF 2001
- 2nd place at Telowestase Quake 3 1v1
- 8th place at Pro Gamers Challenge Quake 3 1v1

You were Germany's team captain for the ESWC 2004 Quake 3 Masters Tournament. Why was this honour given to you?

I wasn't the only one who wanted that position, but I had some good reasons for them to select me, like my work for GIGA and the Electronic Sports League (for which I work as an admin in Quake 3, Call of Duty and Halo). So I've got a good knowledge of the E-Sports and the players. I'm also working as a news reporter for cyberfight.org and planetquake.de.

What was your initial reason for moving to Germany, and what brings you back to South Africa?

I went to school there and then graduated as a software developer. The main reason for coming back is that I want to study Informatics in South Africa. I still haven't decided where though.

Are there any South African players who you think could make it internationally? Why or why not?

Yes and no. There is still a lack of sponsorship in South Africa, as I heard, and you can't make a living from it. But since it's growing here and players can afford to put more time into their game, it looks like there will be some who will manage it. But I doubt they will achieve a status like Fatal1ty. So often a good player is called a "pro gamer", but there are nearly no pro gamers according to the proper meaning of the word. Even good players such as SI.Burnie can't make a living out of their winnings.

What has been your experience of the local community?

It's a lot like a huge family which stands together, not like in Germany. I could be wrong, but that's my experience till now. I want to thank players like Mburr, Mielie, Ph4ntom, Swoop and the Evolve Aim team for getting me into the community, also The_Basilisk for the work he did for me at the WCG finals. Thanks to all of you. I'm happy to be a part of the SA community.

Local Snippets

his year's rAge expo played host to South Africa's second competitive DOOM 3 event. Organized by Arena 77, players came from as far abroad as Cape Town and Durban to compete. Proceedings got underway on Saturday in the form of a 64-man double elimination tourney. Top players Mburr, Viper, Warlock, N[]va, Shadowthief, Nosferatu, FANA and torn blitzed their way through the opposition to make it through to the final eight by the close of play on Friday evening. The tournament resumed on Saturday with a string of spectacular games. Viper knocked Shadowthief into the losers' bracket, and N[]va did the same to FANA. Mburr sent an overly confident torn packing after a thrashing on Frag Chamber. Practice partners Warlock and Nosferatu faced off in the losers bracket as well, and despite an early lead, Warlock staged an impressive comeback to dismiss Nosferatu. As play progressed, Mburr knocked out Shadowthief and FANA did the same to Warlock, meaning Team 42 clan members Mburr and FANA faced off in the losers' bracket finals. To the surprise of most, FANA managed to hold onto an early lead to cinch a victory over Mburr. Relegated to the losers' bracket by Viper, N[]va faced FANA in the losers' bracket grand final in a typically low-scoring game on The Edge 2. A late tactical error by FANA gave the game to N[]va. After such a close losers' bracket grand final, the tournament grand final between N[]va and Viper was disappointingly one-sided. Viper maintained map control for the duration of the game, and after 15 minutes had claimed a comfortable 15-5 victory over N[]va to win the tournament.

Marlous web cafe in Krugersdorp attempted a world record from 24 September 2004 to 27 September 2004 by playing Counter-Strike on a LAN for 100 hours. The two clans who participated were clan inX and clan PI][nK MwC.

ne of the competitions that took place during the BYOC NAG LAN at rAge was the Day of Defeat annual competition. This year there was R6000 prize money up for grabs to the winning team which Clan Reloaded walked away with after a tough battle for first place. A DoD online league is being planned for early next year.

If you are keen on getting involved in the local online gaming community in SA, go to www.forumwars.co.za and join one of the four forum communities in scheduled forum-to-forum online Joint Operations matches. New recruits can sign up with one of the following teams - NAG, Prophecy, SGS and Planet Mars.

South Africa's first online Natural-Selection Draft
League, organized and hosted by the PCGL, was won by team Hogwarts. For details on the next online league, go to www.thepcgl.com.



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it's all the rAge

rriving at The Dome for NAG's Really Awesome Gaming Expo, one could immediately judge the impact the event was having by the number of open parking spots.

Needless to say there were very few. The sheer number of people attending, even from the early hours of the Saturday morning (9am is early for gamers, okay), was an indicator of the unprecedented level of interest being generated by the event. I was eternally grateful that my media access badge allowed me to bypass the barbarian hordes at the entrance queue, as I proceeded through to join the thousands of industry professionals, casual and competitive gamers, and members of the general public.

From the ambitious design of the floor layout, to the impressive scope of the exhibitors, to the tournaments which set new standards in local competitive gaming, the overall experience was, for serious lack of a more appropriate word, awesome.

rAge was a multifaceted event. It was comparable to a city made up of various sectors, each functioning on its own but still part of a general whole. The organisation was split roughly into three main areas: the exhibition, the open LAN, and the Arena 77 tournament. The integration between the sectors was absolutely seamless. The pace of the event was electric, and one had to be quite enthusiastic to keep up with it. Another general point is that variety thrived in a way that, before this weekend, I could only have imagined happening at top international expos. As we all know, it is a literal impossibility to please everyone, but for those whose interest was held even remotely by the theoretical notion of a gaming expo, rAge delivered. Michael James (the editor) told me in an interview a few months before that his intention was to recreate the feel of E3 - well, it's happening.

Almost more noteworthy than the expo itself was the marketing campaign surrounding it. Greater than all its other virtues, rAge managed to attract attention from the non-gaming public, so much that I am convinced the community increased in size over just that one weekend. It was encouraging to see gaming treated for once as a mainstream activity, and if this keeps up, we may see the public interest in the competitive aspect increase as well, bringing us one step closer to our goal of formalizing gaming as a sport. Among the conventional exhibition stands, several stood out as being of special quality. The PlayStation area (one can hardly call it a stand) featured wel-

Arena 77 Tournament Results

Counter-Strike: Condition Zero

1st - Evolve Aim 2nd - Damage Control 3rd - destruKt 4th - Zero Effect

1st - [DC]VipeR 2nd - s3c.8.Nova 3rd - 42::FANA 4th - 42::Mburr

Doom 3

Age of Mythology: The Titans 1st - OZiRiS

Need For Speed 1st - Rainier Dinkelmann

by anton lines

coming demonstrations of the console experience, as well as huge artwork displays which added to the rich and pleasing atmosphere, and a stage showcasing various performing acts. Appreciation of the acts depended largely on personal taste, but the professionalism behind all of them was undeniable. Boogaloos Skate Park's area was a good example of the wide range of "gaming" activities on offer. Skateboarding fits only broadly into the definition, but it provided yet more options for the rAge attendees, with the other stands forming a mixture of gaming hardware and software. The only criticism I have in this area has to do with The Dome's exorbitant pricing (R8 for a Coke, R20 for a tiny packet of biltong and R14 for a terribly uninspiring hamburger), but I suppose that was out of everyone's hands. It's a pity, really.

As I did not play in the NAG BYOC LAN personally, I've had to rely on second-hand accounts from my many trusted sources. Strangely enough, the responses were considerably different from person to person. At first I was a little puzzled as to how opinions could vary so significantly - for instance, I was told, on one hand, about a reliable network and servers that performed excellently even under duress, and on the other hand, that the servers were poorly configured and the games lagged almost to the point of unplayability - but after some careful thought, I discovered the pattern. Casual gamers loved it, serious gamers didn't. The more competitive players have higher standards; they may also find such an experience a little boring, as their focus is quite different. The exceptions were the participants in the community-run tournaments, particularly the Day of Defeat community who organised their own BYOC competition and even managed to pull together a respectable sum of prize money for the winners.

As far as the official tournaments go the staff were experienced and competent and, with the credit of many events behind them, were quickly on top of every situation and attentive to the gamers' needs. In Counter-Strike, the system used in managing the servers has been refined to maximum efficiency, and credit for this innovation goes to Mandus "Recon" Momberg, the undisputed master of CS server setup. One cannot, of course, mention Counter-Strike without mentioning the prizes. R50 000 would be a praiseworthy total for the entire tournament, yet that amount was awarded to the winning team alone. In addition to this, they received Gigabyte sponsored PCs, which will be upgraded quarterly over the next year, as well as a one year clan sponsorship from Gigabyte. Second and third place picked up R30 000 and R20 000 respectively, along with AOpen [2nd place] and Chenbro [3rd place] PC's as well as clan sponsorships for the year. South Africa has never seen prizes of this magnitude - it's almost enough to make me want to play CS again - and if ever there was going to be a decisive period in local "professional gaming", it has surely arrived.

That being said however problems were evident in two areas. The format and structure of the seeding and the points awarded during the group stages. All respected international tournaments work off a basic standardised system and I can see no reason to deviate from this on a local level. Doing so is just creating unnecessary risks. Secondly, the spectator experience was dismal. I was hoping rAge would help to turn this around but, unfortunately, no real advances were made. There were two big screens for Counter-Strike, but they were positioned inconveniently and the final itself was frustrating in that having the screen so close to the tournament area, the HLTV delay meant we knew the players reactions a minute and a half before the action happened on screen. Nobody was able to see the closing rounds, and the feeling of tension and excitement just never materialised. There was also nothing in the way of commentary.

Regarding the games, I spoke to Uwe "Viper" Venter, winner of the Doom 3 competition. Uwe claimed the title with little resistance, winning all of his games by a large margin. "I was surprised to win so comfortably," he said. "Throughout the whole competition, I was waiting for one player to really give me a beating. My friends and I had hardly practiced. Even though we wanted to, we could not, due to work-related reasons. The main thing I noticed was that most of the guys had had no or hardly any comp experience and that gave me a huge advantage. I could see from their gameplay that they had, sad to say, no clue. I was waiting for the Cape Town players to show me a thing or two, but they did not." When asked about the standard of the event, he replied: "I must be honest, at the previous tournaments I have been to, I have been spoiled. Worfaire 2000 and both CPL tournaments were a blast, this tournament cannot compare. 64 people had registered and only about 40 odd players actually pitched up. The rules were only given to us a week before the comp, so players did not know how to practice. The organisers were doing a good job in keeping the players happy, but I still feel to organise a proper tournament you need people who actually know the game and know what rules to set down." Former champion, Karl "Mburr" Buys, only managed fourth place.

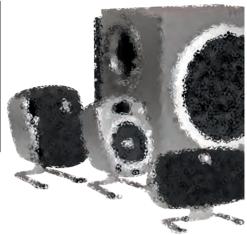
Back in the Counter-Strike camp, we saw another bizarre match up - this time in the final. The teams, Damage Control and Evolve Aim, were both reluctant to play their opponents on their strong maps, and so the match ended up taking place on De Aztec for the first time since mid-2002. What resulted was essentially a free-for-all, with Evolve coming back stronger than ever from the loser's bracket to take home the first prize. I spoke to Clayon "Destroyer" Nieuwenhuizen about his team's victory. "The mood wasn't good at all after losing in the winner's bracket final, because we knew we could play a lot better," said Clayton. "We decided we were not going to make the same mistake that we did at WCG, and so chose to eliminate the maps we had already played. We finally won the coin toss for the second final and had a choice between Aztec and Nuke. We probably would've chosen Nuke if we hadn't played it in the losers bracket final. DC were watching that game and knew our strat for the map." On the tournament organisation, he remarked: "I thought rAge was really wellorganised, the competition and the expo were great."

11 - 2004



Confucius Says: Why meet girl in park when you can read

The **Domain of** The_Basilisk



HEAR YE, HEAR YE!

Usually when a problem's obvious, it's easy to solve. The hard part is working out, firstly, that there is a problem, and secondly, exactly what it is. Once it's been identified and labelled, the solution follows automatically. Well, most of the time. At any rate, this line of theoretical thinking is responsible for the topic of the Domain this month, and by illuminating a problem that I feel very strongly about, I can only hope someone will sort things out as a matter of course. So without further introduction spam, let me get immediately to the problem. I'm talking about the concept of the game soundtrack - an aspect of electronic entertainment that is neglected more frequently than high school homework. It is unfortunate indeed that few people really care about the aural experience when there's all that eye candy hitting the shelves. At least we're aware enough to complain about poor storylines and flat characters, but hardly a mention is made of the fact that game music is, by rule of thumb, dreadfully mundane. However, I'm not here just to whine as Ramjet would have you believe. I've got some positive and constructive points to make as well. There's a lot to explore in the world of game music: mostly bad, but sometimes brilliant.

he most disheartening thing about game soundtracks is that they're so often nondescript. Perhaps it would be better if they were filled with discords and out-of-tune instru-

ments, at least then we'd notice them. As things stand, almost everything sounds the same. Emotion seldom surges through the melodies. Orchestrated music has become the standard, but have things really improved since the days of machine code beeps and MIDI? The performance quality has improved, obviously, but I find the composition of these soundtracks is now just as lazy as it has always been. Let's face it - your standard fantasy string ensemble accompanied by epic chanting is getting just a wee bit contrived. Screaming electric distortion rarely works even outside of game soundtracks. And the military march has, as much as I hate to say it, lost its lustre. Even though the music may be somewhat appropriate, it's almost never worth mentioning on its own. How many scores would you actually listen to outside of the game? Considering that hearing is one of only two senses used in the appreciation of games (the other being sight), we should note that half of the entire experience is being passed over.

Music affects listeners in subtle and powerful ways. For many, it is virtually subconscious. A soundtrack can make a good game great because it works at the most basic levels of atmosphere and emotion. This is true of music in any

entertainment - electronic or conventional. The aspect of setting is always important. An environment that is rich, detailed and furthermore original will draw viewers and/or players into itself. The "world" created by a game must be one that a player would want to live in. It must be an improvement on everyday life; something special and intriguing. Music is an integral part of this. It's a binary condition: the music's got to be better than silence. If you'd rather have some peace and quiet, you'd rather be in the real world, and therefore not playing the game. It is very difficult to pinpoint what makes a particular piece of music appealing, and of course people's tastes will vary, but we can generally appreciate when a piece is well written even if it's from a genre we don't usually listen to. The big problem with game music is not that a particular score won't appeal to everyone, but rather that it's clear the scores are not viewed as priorities by developers. They're seen as second to graphics and the play dynamic, and it shows. On the other side of the scale, games in which the soundtracks are a main focus are also easily spotted, and I've compiled a short list of my favourites for discussion here. While I've certainly not played every game ever made, and my preferences may be significantly different to everyone else's, these choices will serve to illustrate a general principle, a rough guide to good soundtracks, if you will.

We'll start with the wide-ranging MIDIorchestral Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis, composed by Michael Land, Peter McConnel and Clint Baiakian. (This trio of musicians incidentally wrote most of the music for LucasArts' titles during the 1990's, also including Day of the Tentacle, Sam and Max, and the Monkey Island series, but their defining work was undoubtedly the first Indiana Jones title which set the standards for all adventure games to come). Then there's the medley of gripping war themes and flowing interludes in Blizzard Entertainment's classic StarCraft, the startlingly emotional combination of piano and cello in Tama-Soft's rare and underground Remind of You, and Trent Reznor's raw, gritty, gratuitously dark, absolutely groundbreaking score to id Software's Quake. Standing above even these auditory masterpieces are two game soundtracks made from the very substance of dreams: Vangelis' haunting city themes and deep blues tracks in the game adaptation of Blade Runner, and the great Nobuo Uematsu's classical creation of a world within a world, Final Fantasy 8.

Everybody will have their own favourites. but what is common to all of them is that the music doesn't merely support the atmosphere, it creates it. The spirit of humanity is infused in each note, and the music plays on our emotions, tricking us into believing that the fantastical is real. This is what we want. We want to lose ourselves in faraway places. We want to be flown effortlessly away on an emotional high. Life sucks; that's the reason we play games. N



The new Sid Meier's Pirates! carries on with the great play dynamic and design simplicity tradition of the award-winning original while adding more challenging and exciting battle options, and a deeper and more varied role-playing experience, including multiple paths to a wealthy, happy retirement. This and many other features and additions make this gaming classic one of the most highly anticipated releases of this century!





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Letter of the moment

FROM icy

SUBJECT Gaming Changes

I have read a few letters and have come to the conclusion that people are afraid of change. I refer to the most obvious one in the September issue from Dr Krutikova going on about Half-Life 2 and why it isn't good because it isn't the original Half-Life. What is the point of developers making sequels if we want everything the same as the previous versions? Basically what Dr Krutikova wants is a revamped Half-Life with better graphics and the same story. Yes most people enjoyed Half-Life but now Half-Life 2 has to go up against the likes of Doom 3 which is in a class of its own. Most people say concentrate on the future, set goals etc, don't worry about the past because its in the past. How about applying this to the gaming community and not worrying about past titles but looking forward to the ones that lie ahead? The ones that will shape the current gaming world, and bring endless hours of enjoyment to gamers all around the world. Some games will fall others will rise. Half-Life changed gaming why not let its sequel take the success further? Don't be afraid, I'm sure Barney will be in there somewhere to act as an ammo supply for

Perhaps the primary reason for this attitude is that people want to 'relive' what they enjoyed so much in the past. Half-Life was a special experience when it was originally released because it did something different. So arguing for more of the same is a little short-sighted. The biggest problem now is that we're running to a point of creative saturation where nothing is ever truly unique or remarkable anymore and considering all the most creative stuff has already happened we're pretty much screwed. Or does some untapped potential still exist out there somewhere? NAG Ed.

FROM Lourens

SUBJECT None given

I just want to know how long it takes to make a game like Far Cry or Doom? I want to become a computer programmer but I just want to know how long it takes?

At least 2-4 years with a 10-40 strong team of talented people with vision, a few million dollars and an interested publisher. It's a little like making movies these days - a far cry from a two man team in a garage during the school holidays. NAG Ed.

FROM yUDi

SUBJECT Advertising in games

This has been a topic of much debate recently. Should there be advertising in games? I personally don't think it should be done as I believe it will affect the game. In sports games it is alright to have adverts displayed on boards surrounding the field as this enhances the authenticity of the game but this should not be done in any other genre. Some games are set far back in history while others are set in the distant future. Advertising should definitely not be done in games set in those times - it will destroy the gaming experience. Imagine if there was advertising in Max Payne 2 [during the graphic

The bar had a musty smell of death. I approached the counter. The barman pierced me with his ratlike eyes. "I'll have a whiskey, Chivas Regal." I sipped the smooth, mature, premium whiskey with satisfaction. Then I felt something cold at the back of my head. A gun. "Maxey."

It was Marcello. I turned around and faced him. He was wearing an Armani suit and a 22 carat Rolex Mariner watch. His gun, a Smith and Wesson .45, looked menacing.

It wouldn't work, would it? It could get far worse than that. Advertising agency's leave our games alone! *[I just made up the facts on the above products]

The invasion of advertising is inevitable and before you know it they'll be selling games cheaper because they have adverts in them... oh, hang on that's a different planet. Let's just hope they keep the 'advert free for more money' option available. Thanks for the disclaimer - not necessary but thoughtful. NAG Ed.

FROM Elyaradine **SUBJECT** Letter

The Unenlightened often accuse gamers of being anti-social. Sure, there are the immature who think everything's a game, those who are over competitive, and a bunch of other gamer types that could make the top 10 most anti-social, but the reality is that gamers, in general, are so friendly! In the very few online games, forums (like NAG) and mIRC I've visited (I'm cursed with Telkom 56K), aside from a couple of amusing flames, people have just been so cool. They encourage each other to play better and develop new strategies... you don't see this in many places, especially in the "sociable" world where people shut each other down to become more popular. So at the risk of sounding too idealistic, I want to say "keep up that spirit!" and thanks for a great

I usually play under a fake name when going online [or I get annihilated - either with bullets or a deluge of questions] and on many occasions I've witnessed players offering advice, tips and sugges tions to complete strangers on how to improve their game. This is particularly evident in the UT2004 community. It's a refreshing change from all the forum morons and other 'clever' know-it-alls out there. NAG Ed.

FROM Jason

SUBJECT Set-up Suggestions

I was looking to buy a new computer and thought, who could I ask? Now before you hit the reply button to tell me, like so many others, that you don't give computer advice, which I think is a pity, I do realize this and understand why. Nevertheless this got me thinking and I came up with the idea for the setup of the month. This section will supply all the specifications for a great system as it would be very beneficial to your readers. Perhaps your reviewers could take it in turn to put this section together but that is up to you. I also thought you could include a budget machine and a top notch machine for the more extravagant of your readers. I would be most appreciative if I could see this particular improvement. I look forward to the next instalment of your fine magazine.

Nice idea - expect it soon. NAG Ed.

FROM Gregory

SUBJECT Two steps forward...

As far as technological advancements have gone, the computer industry has made 3D cards with a billion transistors and CD shaped disks that can hold more information than most 3 year old hard drives. But for all this advancement why do we still have the standard issue CD ROM drive? Yes we have CD writers and DVD drives etc. but why with all this advancement do we not have a CD $\stackrel{.}{\text{ROM}}$ shuttle or better yet a DVD ROM shuttle? Come on guys I can't believe that big companies in the industry can make CD ROM cup holders and cigarette lighters but have completely failed to create a CD ROM shuttle that can hold several disks in one or even two drive bays.

This is more of a size versus mechanical engineering problem than a technology and ability one. I

FROM Paul

SUBJECT Fan of Doom

The other day I was busy playing a game and I heard a funny noise inside my computer going zing, zing so I opened it and guess what I saw a spinning fan! So my buddies dared me to stick my finger in the spinning blade and... twang! The next thing I saw was a gushing fountain of blood, Kill Bill style man, it was not cool. So will you please contact Microsoft after you read this letter and tell them to slow down their fans? Dear buddies of Paul... next time please tell him to stick his head into a high speed industrial fan - this way we all gain. NAG Ed.

FROM Anonymous

SUBJECT My computer

Ever since I got my new computer, my 1GB RAM, new Asus X800XT graphics card and all the rest my buddy "Brett" has kept coming to my house and saying that my machine is rubbish. This had made me feel sad. What should I do? Take your old case and beat him until he stops moving and screaming. Just make sure you wear gloves and pick a location with soft loose ground, preferably after a good rain when the soil is soft and easy to dig up. Also watch as many episodes of CSI as possible. NAG Ed.

FROM Unknown SUBJECT None

I always read your magazine but in the September issue on the back page I saw that you called people that work at NAG zombies. Is this true, are dead people working for you? It's hard enough to sell advertising in this magazine or any magazine for that matter especially when we pitch our readership as having above average intelligence with heaps of disposable income. We've almost got everyone out there convinced and then someone like you comes along and puts us back in the Stone Age. Thanks! NAG Ed.

FROM Cheers And-I

SUBJECT Good Work

Just want to say that the magazine is good! I haven't bought one for a while but I do intend on doing so... Your magazine is not only a great magazine, but also a brilliant mouse mat. After playing for 4 hours it gets a bit warm and moist, but a guick wipe and I'm back in the game. I'm not sure if I've been insulted or complimented here... NAG Ed.

FROM Kenny

SUBJECT Suggestion

Why don't you include a section for hackers? The only hackers I know of are the NAG writers and they don't adapt well to suggestions, change or guidance. NAG Ed.

FROM ChApS

SUBJECT Hands

Which hand do you play games with and do you play inverted?

I'm left-handed but play with my right-hand and I do play inverted because I grew up playing games like Elite and always pushed up to dip the nose down using the joystick. It just feels more natural. You often find people arguing the point of which way is actually better, NAG Ed.



The 'Letter of the Moment' prize is sponsored by EA Africa

The winner receives 2 games for coming up with the most eclectic chicken scratch



expect hardware manufacturers don't think people will want something that big and expensive sitting inside or on top of their PC. NAG Ed.

FROM Not sure SUBJECT LINUX

I'm sure many more people would like to know more about Linux, myself included. I have heard only whispers about it and I'm sorry to say that I am desperately curious as to what the hell is so special about it... can't you have a review of this operating system? I remember a while back there was a software round-up in a rival magazine where they reviewed Linux but sadly it sucked and shed very little information on the matter. I'm sure many people would like to know more about this and whether it can support games or not

We don't really know much about Linux except that it's built around the penguin kernel instead of the Windows blue screen kernel. I also read on the back of the Linux box that you get a red hat with it or something like that - but that might have been a special offer sticker or something extra you can order through the mail. As a rule we treat every thing we don't understand in the same way - with suspicion and fear. NAG Ed.

FROM Full name supplied **SUBJECT** Gaming Experience

What is "The gaming experience"? It refers to the entire game from sound, graphics, content and even the box and manual. There have been very few games that capture the essence of a game right from opening the box. Small details can make a

game that much more enjoyable - for example the Fallout manual was made like a notebook which the Vault Dweller had kept, or in Max Payne when shooting the elevator-music speaker and Max responds. Extra features take the game beyond the story that you'd get from the game, example being the StarCraft manual which had a detailed back-story on each race, letting you understand what's been going on before you even play the game. Sound and graphics enhance the feeling of the game, for example Doom 3, the dark shadows, swinging lights and the creepy sounds and great voice acting. All this added of course to a great game with a decent balance of story and atmosphere and a great play dynamic and you get "The Gaming Experience". It's some-

thing you remember about a game, how it draws you into the story or game and something that makes you want to experience it again. I can say I got the full gaming experience from games like Fallout 2, Half-Life, Halo and now Doom 3. These games leave you thinking "I want to do that again" and not "What a weak ending/story/game". Let's hope Half-Life 2 will also be an enjoyable and fun "Experience".

This is all too true, often developers worry too much about the game and forget the little touches like the menu, player interface, manual and even the

graphics on the box. A game is the sum of its parts and the better all the parts the better the game and the experience. There are exceptions however as some developers spend way too much time on making things look pretty and forgetting that people actually have to play their sub standard game. NAG Ed.

FROM Etienne

SUBJECT Gaming movement

I've been an avid reader of NAG from get go. And I love your publication. A few friends and I are also into the LAN gaming scene and since high school we have tried to do something for gaming in SA. It started with a small booklet with LAN dates and information on games that we paid for out of our own pockets. From there we progressed into hosting LAN events. And this is what I've been passionate about for 5 years running. We have started a Permanent LAN venue in the Cape called The Gamers Guild, and I believe that we are the only people doing this sort of thing in the whole of SA. Our LAN arena (that's what we like to call it) can seat up to 80 people comfortably. We have 3 phase power and a gigabit backbone network and we are open 7 days a week from 10 till late. And to boot we host a LAN Party every weekend. A lot of money has been put into this business and hopefully it will take off just like your magazine a few years back. This is where I make my plea. I need advice and help if possible from you guys at NAG. We are trying to elevate gaming to a whole new level in SA and with that integrate local LANs with other national LANs. So before I end this mail, I would

like to thank you for your time. Please mail me with any advice at [mail address withheld, ED]. The amateur LAN scene

is growing in South Africa and while we'd love to help everyone. between rAge and 12 tight magazine deadlines a year we just can't. It's great that you're having events and we wish you continued success. We get many requests each month for help with setting up LANS, sponsoring prizes and so on. Our rule is that we can't do anything with anyone because we're busy doing our own thing and don't have unlimited resources. Keep reading and we'll deal with what we can in the community.za section of the magazine. NAG Ed.

FROM Black Lotus **SUBJECT** Badger Conspiracy So the Badger is dead,

may his soul rest in peace - however there are a few important questions that need to be answered relating to his untimely passing.

- 1. Why was no autopsy performed on the Badger's remains? NAG was very quick to grind him up and have his remains strewn across the printing presses of the October issue.
- 2. Why was Ramjet's epitaph wrong? It seems some of the NAG staff are unaware of the

3. What did the passing of the Badger have to do

with NAG cancelling the "Hard Stuff/Soft Stuff" preview of the next issue at the end of the magazine? Was the Badger leaking information to rival publications?

This mystery has more cracks in it than the John F. Kennedy assassination.

So, NAG. What's the scoop?

Umm, what badger are you talking about... exactly? NAG Ed.

FROM Henk **SUBJECT SHIII**

Just a simple comment really, and maybe a small request. I have been following the progress of Silent Hunter III after seeing a very short piece on it in some issue earlier this year. This game is going to set the standard for all types of simulations to come, in my opinion. However, I was very disappointed when, at the official forum, a small census was held and I was the only South African. Not that this is any of your fault, but I would appreciate a one or two page article outlining the lengths to which the developers are going to make this simulation as authentic as possible, except for excluding lifeboats. Also, I've never seen the development of a game so transparent, if I may use a political term here. The website has extensive Q&A sessions and live chat sessions logs, which was aimed at the developers directly. I think that the article you had about the CEO of Ubisoft really was spot on, as Ubisoft is also responsible for the development and publishing of Silent Hunter III. And I must say that when it comes to the customers of Ubisoft, they really do listen. I don't know what type of following Silent Hunter II had here in SA - I also only came across it last year. So I think that a proper introduction to the world that is Sub Simulators is appropriate?

Games like this have a limited and dedicated following which is why the development process can follow committee guidelines. We will review the game when it arrives in SA and perhaps then it'll get the attention it so richly deserves. Ping. NAG Ed.

FROM naXus SUBJECT StarCraft II

In the times of WarCraft III, now passed but still lingering, one cannot help but reminisce about the years before. A time when StarCraft blew our minds and crawled over every single multiplayer server, without heroes as we know them today and selected characters shown in tiny pre-rendered screens as the only 3D available. Now we have a 3D engine, patched and re-patched to create the perfect basis for a near perfect strategy title (WarCraft III). Blizzard has and always will create incredible titles. Now moving towards the platform market with StarCraft Ghost which, even being their first, looks to give them a brilliant head start. After the release of WarCraft III I hoped and wished upon many stars that a StarCraft II project would see the light of day, but nothing has yet revealed itself. Why not try and convince them?

I am pretty sure there will be another StarCraft game but perhaps Blizzard is waiting for the right moment to announce it? Never fear, StarCraft II and more than likely Diablo III will eventually be announced. I don't say this because I have access to any top secret information - it just makes financial sense. NAG Ed.

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at least you can now see why some magazines never get to their

circumstances surrounding the Badger's demise.

Previews)

NAG's Wanted List



Chronicles of Riddick PC 2005

The Xbox version rocked - it's as simple as that. So a PC version, especially in our Xbox-poor country, is something to write about. There is the matter about transferring the control scheme to work well on a PC, but why get tied up in semantics?



Pikmin 2 NGC Q4 2004

Just when we thought Miyamoto-san was just milking the brainstorms of his youth he unleashes Pikmin on us. And the second one takes things a lot further as you now return to garnish some treasure, with the help of a co-op able sidekick...



Juiced PC, PS2, Xbox TBA

Word is that we might still see the excellent Juiced before Christmas. Considering that the pregold copies of the game have been circulating the office for some time now, it's safe to say Juiced is one game we're definitely looking forward to.

The Mortal Kombat series gets bloodier, our Prince of Persia swings back into action, things are getting seriously hairy in FE.A.R., it's a jungle in Zoo Tycoon 2, Jak is still trying to save the world in the third game, there are Pirates galore over at Sid Meier's place and prepare for an education in crime, thanks to GTA: San Andreas.

Project: Snowblind

Developer Crystal Dynamics Publisher Eidos Platform PC, PS2, Xbox Release Date Q4 2004



At E3 this looked like standard shooter fair, but Snowblind is actually an action-styled offshoot to the Deus Ex Universe, using the same type of technology approach, but in a package that would make Mr. T happier. A first person with squads, cybernetic mods and some crazy weapons - of course we want to play it. The game obviously does not rest on its laurels, sporting far brighter and more intense scenes than anything out of Deus Ex. And to keep the purists happy it has nothing actually to do with the series, at least in name and story.

Tork: Prehistoric Punk
Developer Twak Publisher Ubisoft Platform Xbox Release Date 2005



Tork might actually be released one day, this time through Ubisoft. The quirky 3D platform game starring a cave boy sporting an interesting headset has always looked good since it's been announced in 2002 but when Microsoft pulled its support from the project, all seemed doomed. Now the game is coming back again and we might see some dinosaur-clubbing happen after all. It's also due to retail at a very affordable price, so there's not really a reason not to get it, unless you don't own an Xbox.

Grand Theft Auto GBA

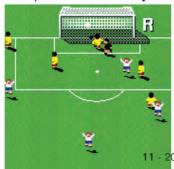
Developer Rockstar Publisher Take 2 Platform GBA Release Date November 2004



Taking a stronger story approach, GTA heads for the handhelds in this title where you cruise Liberty City out for vengeance. Reminiscent of the original title in looks, it boasts a new story line, new vehicles and areas, plus the natural goodness of law-breaking violence and nastiness that the series has gained notoriety for. Since Rockstar are still doing the development honours, we're putting aside fears of yet another cash-cow port to the GBA and this might actually be one that any fan of the series should get. 'nuff said.

Sensible Soccer

Developer Tower Publisher Kuju Platform Mobile/Java Release Date Q4 2004



Do you remember the Bitmap Brothers? Probably not, but they rose to fame on titles that went on to define genres, including the classic Sensible Soccer, a title that was innovative years after its original release. Arguably the granddaddy of all football games, Kuju and Tower are porting the game to mobile platforms, adding a lot of extra features. Boasting over 50 teams and 800 players, not to mention countless customizing and play dynamic options, it all seems just too big for a meager phone...

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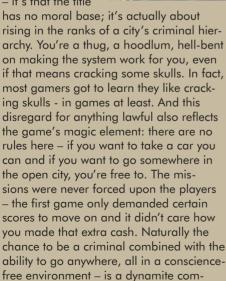


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o what is GTA about? Grand Theft Auto, as its name suggests, leads your lead character into a life of crime. But there's no sop story here: you're not looking for your parents' killer, you don't work undercover, you didn't get forced into this life of crime

thanks to a sorry set of circumstances and you definitely don't have a conscience. In fact, if one thing isolates GTA from its gaming peers – past, present and near future - it's that the title



WORKING the Streets

1997 saw the release of an inconspicuous top-down title. During this period everyone was infatuated with Lara Croft's breasts, the hype machine around Metal

bination. And if you don't get that you'll

probably never play the game either.

Gear Solid was gathering pace and 3D was all the rage, so when a sprite-based game with comical graphics and limited visual appeal got released on the PC, few took notice and the tech elite snubbed it as retro. That is until they realized that you could take any car and run over pedes-

trians. It wasn't like Carmageddon, where killing innocent bystanders was a means to survive races: GTA might have awarded small bits of cash for taking out city dwellers, but you could do it just because you had a car and they were there

- that was the deal maker. Hell, the people rarely even jay-walked – if you wanted to cause some hit-and-run mayhem, you had to go looking for it (like swerving onto the pavement). But a million dollars meant you get to the next city and the easiest way to get that kind of cash was to take jobs from criminal syndicates and hustlers. Of course, you could also just sell cars at the dock...

EWUZGO.

This resulted in a phenomenon amongst gamers, especially after the game was ported to the PlayStation. Even if the awkward key design caused some criticism, especially on the PlayStation (based around steering cars, the interface wasn't exactly convenient for steering a character running over pavements), its popularity was immense. And the mainstream world became attracted to it - part for the opengameplay mechanism that managed to draw in more players than the traditional buying fans and part for the controversy that quickly came to surround the game. Looking back, GTA had very little to make it controversial - the graphics were out-dated and the violence was comical,

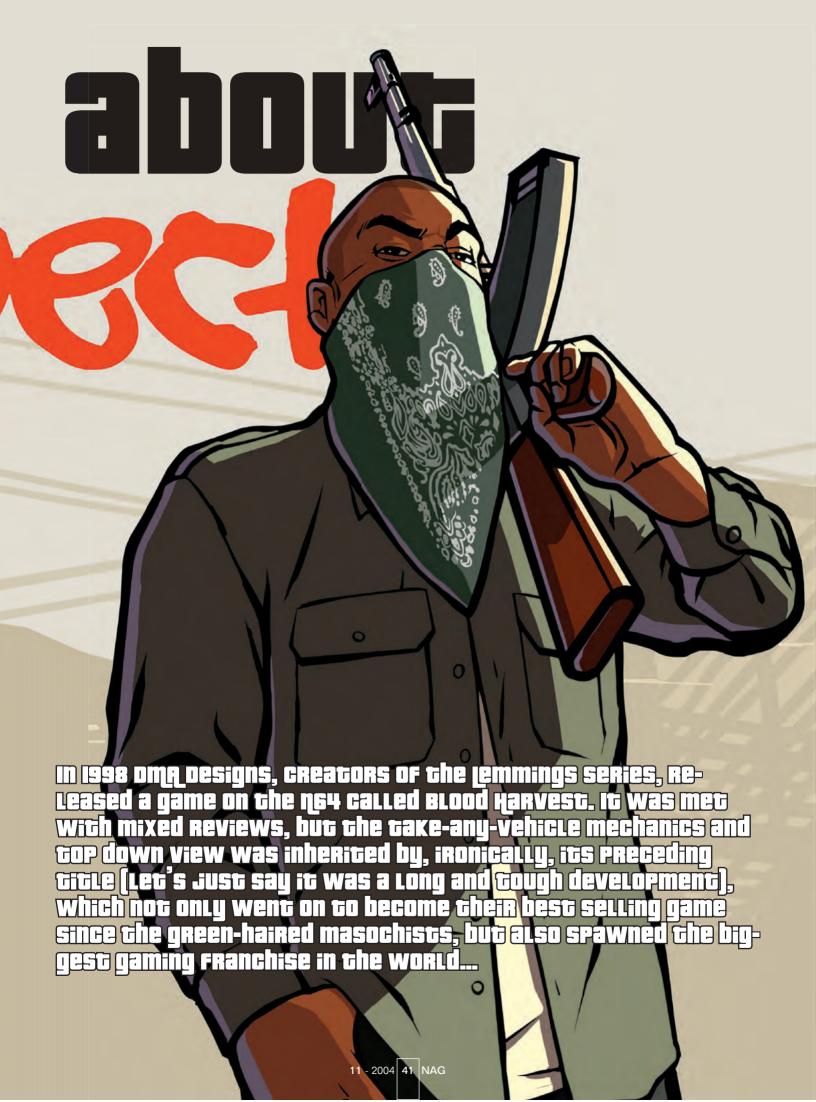
plus any thoughts of prostitute shagging and killing was far-off in the gaming horizon

- but it caused a stir, with some publications calling for its banning. It was, of course, the first game that openly demanded criminal activity against innocent (and not-so innocent) victims, all without a shade of grimace for what you are committing. It's also worth pointing out that the first game already offered Rampages – a mode which challenges you to kill a specific amount of people in a certain time limit. Obviously some groups were going to be outraged, but nobody started killing people and no lawyers made it their day job to launch mind-numbingly absurd law suits against games that might kill your kid. DMA tactfully side-stepped most of it something that would become the game's ethos after a while - since GTA and all its siblings remain the most controversial titles in the history of gaming,

There's a reason for this: money. To date



Grand Theft Auto III remains the top-selling game on the PlayStation 2 and its pseudo-expansion GTA: Vice City boasted over 4 million pre-orders, a number that even the developers of Zelda are probably shaking their heads over. Hell, to date the series has sold over 30 million copies, beaten only by the likes of The Sims and



crime in the uk **GTA** hits London, twice

GTA saw two expansions released for it. The first was London 1969, a step back into the past as you take jobs

from British gangsters. It was the same game, but with a new city, new vehicles and new missions. Still, 1969 never set the world on fire and served more to keep the fans happy. You could accuse DMA of milking their initial success, but the developer released a second expansion, London 1961, on the web for free shortly after that. Neither were bad expansions, but the fans who played and finished them remain a small part of the game's large following.

the long-running Madden Football series. If you need more proof, GTA III was only dethroned in the second year of its sales from its number one UK chart space by the stand-alone expansion Vice City.

Anarchy in the city

GTA was followed in 1998 by GTA II, where we finally got to understand why the first game was all sprite-based. Making use of some nifty coloured lighting effects and other visual gags, not to mention 3D, the game remained top-down but acted a serious resource hog. Still, the masses bought it and the GTA lineage lived on. This had more to it than the pretty pictures, though - GTA 2 had an actual goal: taking over the city, which you did by defeating all of the gangs in the city. At the start of the game you could choose one of three gangs (there were eleven in total in the game) and by getting respect slowly take control and take out syndicates. The mission structure moved you from city to city until you defeated everyone and became the kingpin of all criminaldom; all this while you could still do what you wanted - including those hijackings, hit-and-runs and the occasional, sporadic gun fight. But the world was edgier and street fights were common, with the police and army patrolling the towns. This harder world moved away from GTA's straight forward but animated feel and the ability to mess with gangs at your choosing showed the start of how the series would evolve and set the framework for the next and biggest game in the series. Multiplayer also appeared here, but it would be the last GTA title to see any networking capabilities. So how exactly do you go beyond GTA 2? We all know that now: go 3D. But it's not a jump we should take lightly - GTA III became the biggest selling game in the series history for reasons beyond simply following the crowd. It introduced a whole new immersion to the game. Before GTA III all we had was a top-down view of the

world – you acted as some bizarre cretin in



a blimp controlling his puppet down there – there was no real personality to anything you did other than that you were allowed to do it. But down here, in the city, it was right in front of you. And in a fitting move, the series returned to Liberty City, the first residence of GTA, only this time you did everything from the ground. Yes, we know all that – let's get to what made the game a real smash hit.

Welcome to liberty city

Free-will combined with all-out access is a combination for social disaster - we've established that. And the very opportunity to break those rules without fear of the cops kicking in your door (unless you stole the game) is what made the entire GTA series a smash hit. But what made it become one of the best-selling titles of all time? The title on its own turned Take Two and their mature-titles label Rockstar from just another game company to literal Rock Stars, at least to their stock-holders. Well, it got personal. Suddenly the calm

exterior of the city became a vibrant interior, complete with traffic patterns, roaming pedestrians and a full day/night and weather system – Liberty City was alive and breathing. Now combine THAT with free-will and all-out access. All of a sudden you're hitting people with a baseball bat – right in front of you; or you see a jaywalking schmuck bounce across your bonnet and over your roof... the whole crime part became more apparent and suddenly people realized just what the potential of the game really is. And they loved it.

This intimate approach also gave more credence to the missions, which now served to branch out the story in the background. Playing the missions continued the script and unlocked more areas of the city, including new vehicles, but in GTA-style it's all at your own leisure. DMA, who after the game's PC release in 2002 became Rockstar North, saw this and gave players lots of opportunities in stunt ramps, secrets and even some off-the-track missions.

make some noiseThe sounds of GTA

"Radio – someone still loves you." Queen hasn't made its appearance on the GTA soundtracks yet, but Freddy had something going there. The first two games featured parody sound tracks, since music tracks are expensive, but the excellent quality mixed with the hilarious radio stations was a treat, especially since cars would be tuned to different stations – often you'd find yourself first adjusting the frequency before riding away from the cop armada chasing you because you were following a chat show.

GTA III brought licensed tracks with it, ranging from original tracks to popular artists and Vice City took this even further by releasing a box set featuring the licensed music tracks – the game had over nine hours of radio noise on offer. The stations in all the games ranged widely, from Reggae tunes to Heavy Metal and from 80s electro to mind-numbing chat shows, often hosting some of the most bizarre characters. Half the fun in GTA is to explore the radio stations and find all the quirky bits, which is usually anything between songs. The PC version even allowed users to load their own MP3s up as a station, in case you heard it all.

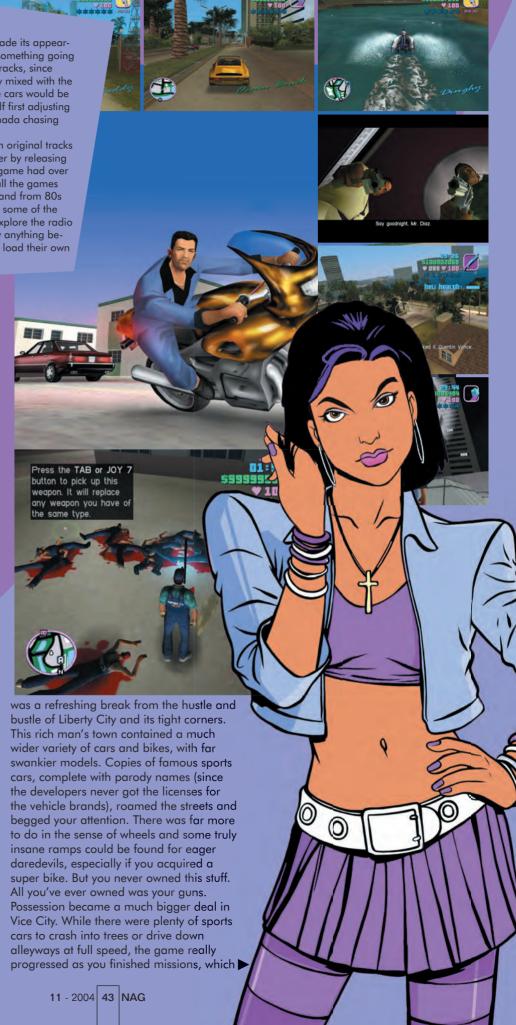
For those who sought a break from their criminal endeavours could always grab a taxi, fire truck, ambulance or police cruiser and do some work in that field – with the cops it involved doing what they did best: running criminals off the road.

The gangs were back, this time blending in with the story and controlling their respective territories. GTA III's other triumph was in how seamlessly it blended moving on foot and in a vehicle (including the Dodo, a light aircraft). Jumping in and out of cars became so natural that sometimes you could elude chasing police for long stretches simply by running between motors and snatching them from their occupants. Those cars! Thanks to the massive city, you were forced to eventually take on wheels, but it's really the opposite: the large city is there for everyone's favourite pastime - driving. GTA III even introduced some primitive drive-by gun action from the side, but to really understand the cars, you have to look at Vice City, the second-best selling game in the series.

crime on the beach

Vice City was released in 2002 and acted as a prequel to GTA III, though the main characters aren't related. For the first time you had a name, Tommy Vercetti, and you find yourself in the sunny city of Vice City, based on Miami, after a cocaine deal goes south. Now with the mob wanting action and the coke thieves on the loose, what's a man to do? Start a criminal empire, naturally.

Vice City was bright and sunny. A radical departure from the GTA series' grimy exteriors, the game dropped players right in the middle of 80s decadence. Rock bands were trashing hotel rooms, freaky drugs were all the rage and money was everywhere, especially on the roads. The cars took a serious step up from what the third title offered and the ability to take long cruises all over Vice City's sunlit scenery



the History of DMA How to make a lot of money legally

Founded by GTA creator David Jones in the late eighties, the name actually means "Doesn't Mean Anything". They went on to do two side-scrollers, Menace and Blood Money, both being minor hits and gathering critical acclaim. Lemmings, the bizarre puzzle title where you had to stop little people from killing themselves, launched DMA into the big leagues, netting over 20 million sales. From there the company continued to create more Lemmings titles, though

they also released Walker, a side-scrolling Mech shooter, in 1992 and Hired Guns, a strategy FPS, in 1994.

That same year saw the release of Unirally via Nintendo and the first DMA game not published by Psygnosis. Soon they were invited to join Nintendo's elite development squads (including the likes of Rare) and got to work on Blood Harvest, a title involving aliens who came to Earth to harvest humans for food. The game ran into a lot of trouble, especially with the Japanese publisher and was eventually published by Midway on the N64 in 1998. Blood Harvest also intro-



duced the open-vehicle and top-down feel of the first GTA game, which was published in 1997 and became DMA's biggest hit since Lemmings. DMA was sold to Gremlin Interactive that year and went on to release Blood Harvest as well as Space Station Silicon Valley, another N64 title. In 1998 Infogrames bought Gremlin and DMA went out on their own again, publishing GTA 2 through Take 2, who established the Rockstar label the follow-

ing year. David Jones left the company and went to work with Rage, developing Mobile Forces.

Tanctics and Wild Metal Country went on to be released and two years later GTA III arrived on the scene. The 2001 game became a massive success story and shot DMA and Take 2 up the ranks in both fame and controversy. In 2002 the team released the PC version and joined Take 2 as Rockstar North and then released Vice City, which became their second-biggest title. After that the team released Manhunt, a game that met with mixed reactions but reflected Rockstar North's ideal to push the gaming envelope. Right now they've just seen the release of San Andreas, the fifth GTA title and plan to release another on the next generation of consoles.

apart from unlocking more of the city, also allowed you to buy more and more properties. At first these were merely save spots, but soon you have a small criminal empire, ranging from strip clubs to an icecream van service that actually sold drugs. Still, the game never lost sight of the GTA mantra: free-will and access to everything. Completing the missions only boosted the story and gave you more things to do on your own time and apart from being conditions to help complete the game, the properties gave

> you extra cash as well. Vice City also introduced sets of clothes - useful if the police were after you – and to put a cherry on top of this decadence-filled sundae, you could even get hold of a helicopter and commute through your crime spree in

But enough of all this lone gunman and mob nonsense; what everyone wants to be today is a gangsta.

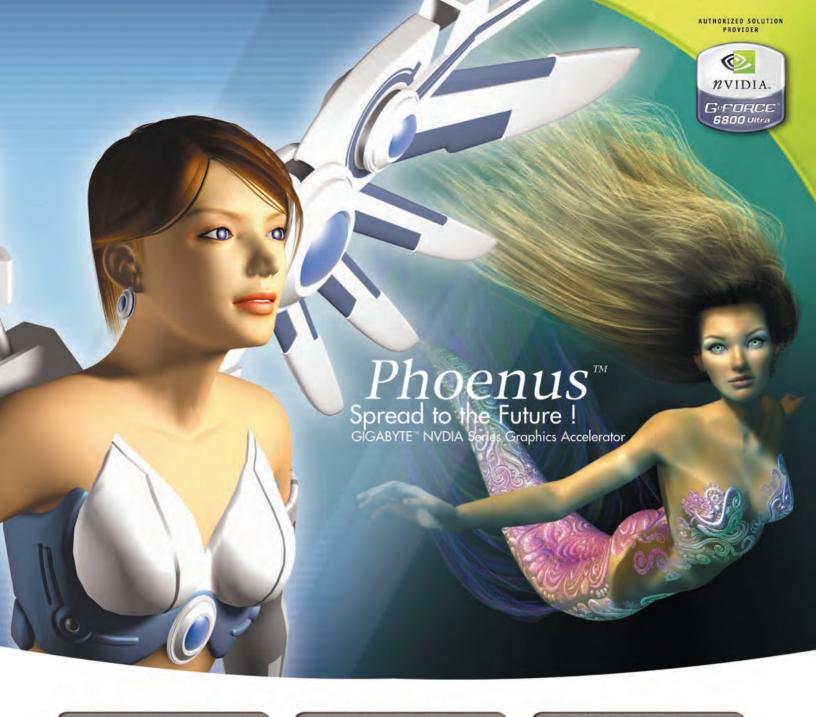
in the hood

It's been established why the series has always been a gold mine and how GTA has evolved with every game to add something new at least we can't blame the developers of resting on their laurels. And San Andreas, the next in the series, plans to tip everything on its head.

Continuing Vice City's move away from Liberty City and the generic thug character, in San Andreas you take on the role of Carl Johnston, a young African American who returns to his neighbourhood in the early 90s after his mom dies. In no time he's hooked up with his familiar crew and the street life begins. Now anyone who has kept a tab on SA's details knows about the ability to pick up weight and the need to eat. But once again these are just small changes reflecting a much bigger project: GTA the RPG.

No, no need to run. If anything, Rockstar are staying true to the game series: it's still a free-roaming, do-what-you-want 100% crime title, complete with taking out gangs in decent drive-bys, far more shops to rob and even the opportunity to rob suburban homes. The difference is that all the stats the GTA games have always been keeping on your character are actually being used: the more you drive the better your driving becomes and the more you handle an Uzi the better you start shooting the weapon, though you never need to manage this process. It ties into nearly everything in the game, including a respect rating, where you gain respect by doing certain missions, taking out rival gangs and tagging over rival graffiti – if you're really good you can start collecting fellow gangsters who'd be happy to pop people for you.

Your character steps up from Vice City's clothes by being more personal – eat too much food and you become fat, work out a lot and you become a brick shithouse. You can go to a barber and get different hairstyles while tattoo artists will adorn your body with mean designs. The clothes are still around and you have a much wider choice, but since not everything is just



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about money anymore (respect, after all, is everything) it will take a while to gather all these things and develop the character you really want. Even cars can be modified, at least cosmetically, and this time if your automobile is missing, you might want to check out the police impound...

San Andreas also boasts being the biggest GTA game to date, sporting two cities and a massive countryside complete with several small towns. Familiar vehicles return along with new ones and the game has a full highway system – a monster truck and 18-wheel trucks also make a debut for those moments when you need to cause some roadside mayhem.

It doesn't stop there, though – your character can now swim, climb up things, sneak attacks and brandish knives, lethally combined with the ability to learn boxing and martial arts. As a GTA fan it got my head reeling...

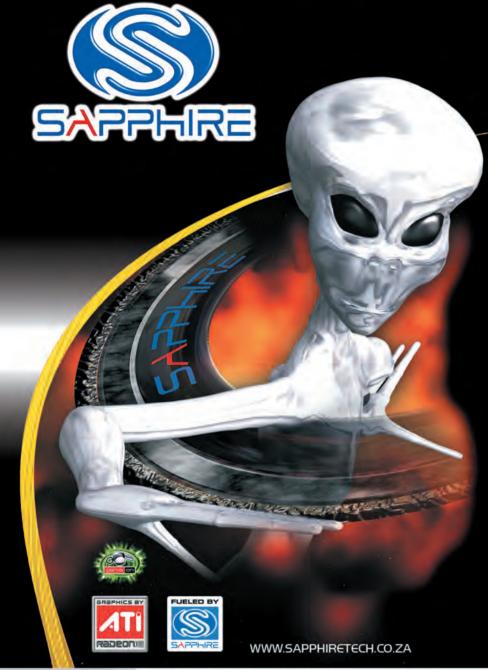
ı am a crime god

If the GTA thing never works out for Rockstar, they can always release a guide on how to handle media outcries, because the series has had a lot of that, even being implicated by a ambulance-chasing lawyer as a tool used by a teenager to plan a massacre at his school, where in actual fact it was just one of the games the kid owned. Then again, the titles have all brandished 18 or Mature restrictions, so it's a moot argument.

But there's no denying, especially amongst its fans, that GTA is an out-and out criminal game and it's hard to argue that it doesn't encourage criminal activity, because it does - but in the game world. Apart from the spans of honours granted to the series over this piece, its biggest one is to show that games are about escapism. To date no-one, unless you believe the vague newspaper reports and moneyhungry civil lawyers, has gone on a crime spree, grabbing cars and shooting people for the hell of it thanks to playing any of the GTA games. Hey, we all dug doing it in the game and on a pound-for-pound basis most GTA gamers are really sick and sadistic at times, but in other games we got to run hospitals. Isn't anyone afraid that gamers might start brandishing scalpels and try to do heart transplants? No, people just like to do what they can't in real life - Take 2's bank account should tell you that. San Andreas is only the next chapter in a long series and with the next GTA planned for the PlayStation 3, we've got more law-breaking to look forward to; as long as Rockstar stick to the gameplay basics, which have obviously not changed since



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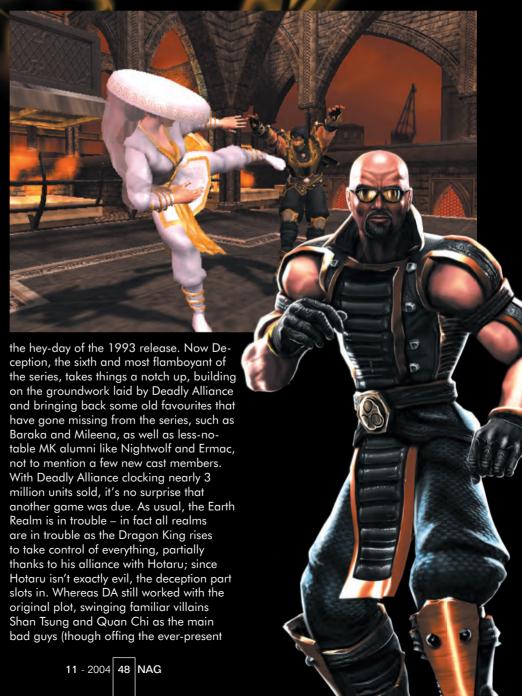
MIRAL KUMBAT PECEPTION

Ready... Fight! Remember those words? They were emblazoned in our frail minds the first time we played Midway's masterpiece. The announcer's bass-boosted voice thundered the command, Shang Tsung waved his hand from his throne in approval and your opponent pounded a fist into your jaw, crimson blood spraying across the screen. Welcome back to Mortal Kombat.

When Midway first released Mortal Kombat back in 1993, it was more of a joke – the ludicrous violence was meant to shock as much as entertain and the videograbbed combatants were very different from the animated sprites of Street Fighter and its peers. In no time it was a success, especially when it came to delivering the macabre Fatality moves which ranged from burning opponents to a crisp to removing vital organs, including hearts and spinal columns. Ah, who can forget those days of innocent, violent bliss? The series had a good run on the sequel, but somehow derailed completely with the third game, trying to blend 2D characters with 3D environments. The real problem was that MK became old – the violence didn't carry the novelty it used to and simply adding more characters and a few extra dimensions to moves didn't do the trick. Even the more polished fourth game didn't woo fans as it should have.

That's when 2002's Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance stepped in. Going completely 3D, Midway made good use of today's hardware, rendering new and old characters alike in impressive third dimensions. Graphically it wasn't Dead or Alive calibre, but it remained impressive. The real switch, though, came in the approach. Handing each character weapons, fighters boasted three fighting styles and players could create combos by stringing together moves from the various disciplines. The Konquest mode served as a tutorial to learn the combinations and each character's special moves, while the Krypt hid away locked characters, concept art and other goodies for hardcore fans.

In short, it changed everything about the game, but managed to keep the essence of the series there: it was still Mortal Kombat, but one finally saw a chance to return to



Mortal Kombat: Deception preview











Developer: Midway Publisher: Midway

Distributor: Ster Kinekor (011) 445 7900

Release date: November 2004

Platforms: PS2, Xbox

MK protagonist Liu Kang was a change in direction), Deception looks to give us a new reason for beating up our opponents. Beyond that, though, the game sticks to the tried and trusted ladder system wherein you progressively beat up opponents until you reach the final boss.

Of course, if it isn't broken, don't fix it – and there is little wrong with the traditional progression in the fighting genre. Instead, developers of these titles have sought ways to expand on the play dynamic without interfering with the flow of the action. Introducing a new fighting system was DA's trump card and Deception sticks to it, elaborating on moves but not messing with the mechanics behind it, though some might find it a bit faster than DA's. Instead, Midway got creative with the levels. Much larger than before, it's now possible to knock opponents into other arenas. The destructible component of the world has also been enhanced as you can smash windows and break a lot of stuff, not to mention bump into physics-controlled hanging corpses and other delightful decorations. Death traps make for a new addition: these devices, placed in specific levels, come in the form of massive drops, a large, red-hot stamping press and even spiked rollers - and mean instant death to anyone who stumbles into them; it's a quick way to win a round, but these should not be confused with the stalwart MK fatality replacements, such as the acid pit in the second game. Knocking opponents into these only finish the round, but won't automatically win you the fight or hand you a fatality bonus.

To do that you need to execute a proper Fatality – keeping with DA conventions every character has two, though word from the floor is that they are much improved over the lacklustre ones from DA, including a rumoured Sub Zero version where he rips out the skull and spinal column and uses it to bludgeon his victim's frozen cadaver to pieces. A new twist to this aspect of the game is the capability to commit suicide. Suitably named Hara Kiri, if you lose a fight you can rattle off a key combination that encourages your disgraced fighter to end things gracefully. This could make for some interesting situations where two players try and beat each other to the killing move: nothing would suck quite as badly as a hapless victim stealing your well-deserved fatality from you by popping his character in the head (though knowing the series, suicides are bound to be far more creative than that).

Mini games are another new aspect of the game. In Kombat-themed versions of chess and what is essentially multiplayer Tetris,









The New Blood

Kira

A recruit to Kabal's Black Dragon clan, Kira is ruthless enough to take the clan places, providing she can best the followers of the Dragon King to prove herself. We're sure she can.

Hotaru

A neutral arrival to the game, Haturo is from the Seido realm, fighting for law and order. He intends to defeat the emperor Shao Khan and return Outworld to order, though that meant an alignment with the not-so-nice Dragon King.

Darrius

To some a freedom fighter, to others a terrorist, Darrius lives in the shadows and fights for freedom and the good of all in the Realm of Order. That's what you get for being leader of the official resistance.

Ashrah

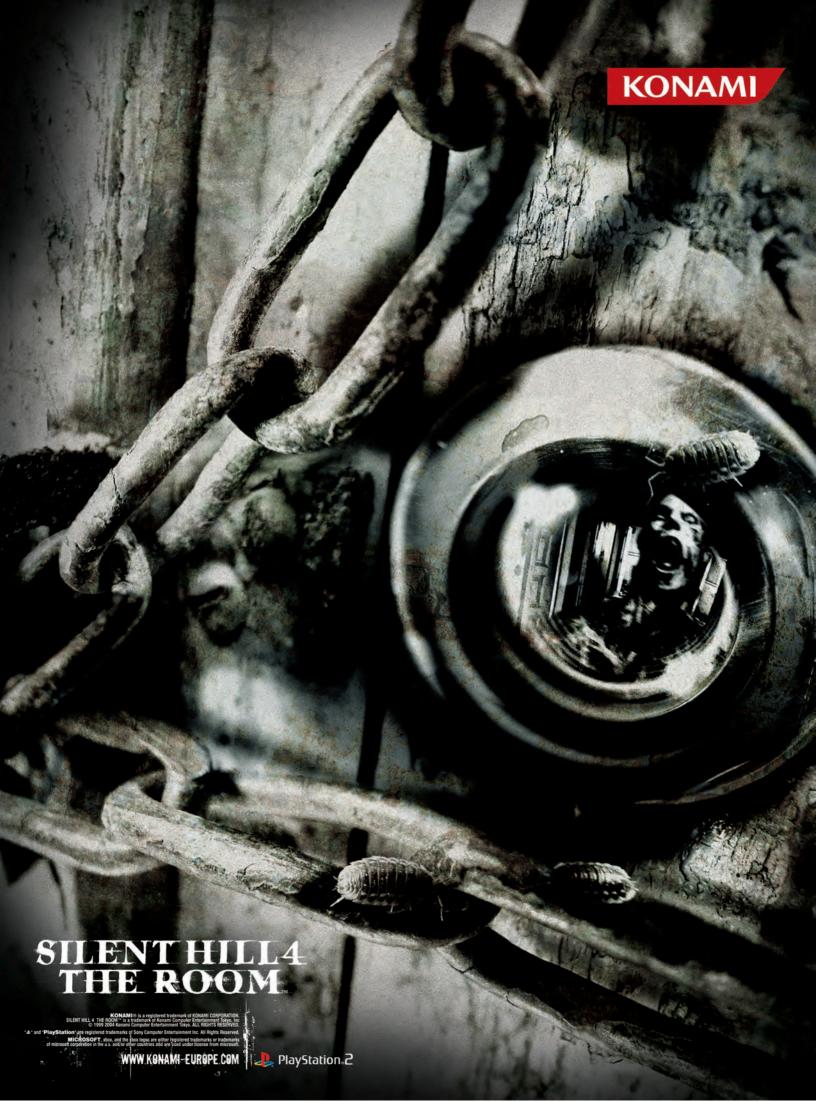
This attractive lass is actually a demon that managed to escape the Netherrealm. To achieve purification, she has to use a holy sword and slay as many Netherrealm creatures as possible, including the super-evil Noob Saibot.

Shujinko

Liu Kang is a newblood compared to this monk, who has travelled the realms for ages, attempting to retrieve the Kamidogu from the Elder Gods. That means he can kick some

settling their differences over a quick game of Chess, but it's a fun diversion; obviously these don't affect the main game. The new Konquest adventure mode, though, does. Taking a more free-form approach, players can explore the Mortal Kombat world, aet training from several characters, meet even more and perhaps find a few hidden Koins while they are at it. While not really more than a glorified tutorial mode, it still remains an excellent way to accustom new players to the series and it's nice to see Midway stuck to it. The less enticing Krypt, with all its hidden stuff, still works the same way – you don't know what you are getting until you buy it, but those who were annoyed by this labour-intensive egg hunt can always wait for a content list to appear on the web. Personally we never enjoyed spending a few thousand hard-earned Koins only to discover that we now own a digital piece of concept art, but the system was popular enough not to change it. Deadly Alliance breathed new life into the ailing franchise, which was stuck alone in the move to 3D, since Mortal Kombat wouldn't fit in with the polygonshenanigans of Tekken and Soul Calibur, and Deception looks to be the title that will fine-tune and define exactly what fans can expect from Raiden, Sub Zero and the other fighters all kicking ass for the sake of humanity. So far it's looking good. In fact, the polish is well above anything the series has produced before and fans should get a kick out of it when it's released – pun intended.





The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion





Developer: Bethesda · Publisher: Bethesda · Supplier: MegaRom [011] 234 2680 · Genre: Adventure Release Date: 2006

eeping in the tradition of making games current systems struggle to run. The Elder Scrolls team over at Bethesda has been hard at work on the next title in the series, named Oblivion, in development since Morrowind was released in 2002. And since the third game garnered a lot of rewards (as did most of the other Elder Scrolls RPGs), it's a tall order awaiting this sequel.

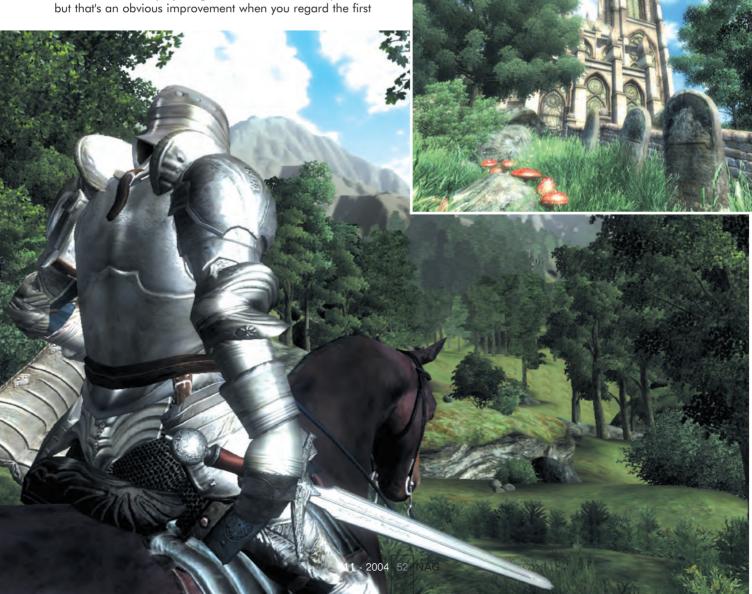
Still taking place in the land of Tamriel, the action plays out in the capital province of Cyrodiil, where the emperor has been killed by an unknown assassin. Your task is to find the new heir, who has been hidden for his own protection. Time isn't on your side, though, since without a ruler on the throne, the gates of Oblivion (hell, technically) open and demons invade the world. So you need to find the heir, stop the demons and through all of this eventually figure out who is behind it all. And in true Elder Scrolls style we can expect a lot of sub-quests and a huge open world to explore.

Morrowind encountered a lot of criticism for lacking player interaction with the world. One way Bethesda plan to change this is with the new Radiant Al engine, which hopes to give NPCs more life as they will make choices on what they want to do, eat and who to speak to based on their characteristics and mood. Better lip-syncing and movement is also promised, but that's an obvious improvement when you regard the first

screenshots.

As usual, the Morrowind game looks stunning, so it's no surprise that it's also slated for 'future consoles', which we can only assume means the next generation. But the game looks incredibly lush and detailed - more than any other RPG out there (or probably any FPS for that matter) and it appears that you'll be doing a lot of riding around green landscapes, doubtlessly sporting very different towns and inhabitants.

It will be interesting to see how games like Fable and Jade Empire, not to mention the innovative control advancements in Arx Fatalis, influence Oblivion's RPG structure, since the series has been a bit rigid of late for newer players. Judging by the technology ambitions you can expect a heavy performance requirement to get it to run, but we're not expecting it anytime before 2006, unless Bethesda says something to the contrary. And as usual, it's good to see another Elder Scrolls game, no matter what you thought of the former ones.











Zoo Tycoon 2



Developer: Blue Fang · Publisher: Microsoft · Supplier: Microsoft [011] 257 0217 · Genre: Management Release Date: O4 2004









s far as Tycoon games go, Microsoft and Blue Fang

Tycoon's move to 3D. While the first game was limited because of its 2D approach, going into the third dimension has allowed Blue Fang to explore the game world with more detail. Considering that you are working with creation's most temperamental animals, swooping in up close to see how happy they are is a welcome new addition; you can even snap pictures of them for your new Photo Safari album. The third dimension also takes away a lot of Zoo Tycoon's restrictive build features. Now encampments are far more freeform and natural boundaries such as cliffs can be used instead of fencina every

single side of the feature. Players can also adjust the textures for a more natural look to the terrain, plus the ability to add effects such as unique waterfalls and more natural flora means that zoo keepers can create exactly the look they're going for. Using the two new Zoo Guest and Zookeeper modes, you can either visit your zoo first hand to see if it's what the brochure promised, while the latter allows for a more first-hand way to look after your creatures.

This attention to detail in turn works in your favour, as visitors tend to react better if the animals appear in more natural locations, giving you bonuses in return. Naturally the exhibits themselves are pickier than ever - a new Al system hopes to bring more natural and unpredictable behaviour to your animals.

Zoo Tycoon 2 boasts three game modes: Campaign, Sand Box and Freeform. The last two are essentially the same, allowing you to do what you want, except in freeform challenges and limitations still affect your game. The game boasts much larger play areas, not to mention more diverse locations (we're curious to see how a Zoo in Antarctica would do) and the 3D engine looks luscious, to say the least. Instead of simply forcing out a sequel with marginal improvements, it looks like Blue Fang has come to the party and will deliver a game beyond fan expectations.







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Jak 3



loper: Naughty Dog · Publisher: SCEE · Supplier: Ster Kinekor [011] 445 7900 · Genre: Platform Action

ur favourite elf and weasel are back in action as Nauahtv Doa prepares for another chapter in the incredibly popular Jak & Daxter series. Even though Jason Rubin is leaving the show after the third game, the game is well on track to be released, plus the team assures us that more titles could be forthcoming. In short, this is not the end of the duo, especially if they keep on making those profits Sony likes so much, thanks to over 5 million units sold to date. Just a shame that their developers aren't always welcome at the company's parties...

The third game takes place a year after Jak and Daxter saved Haven City from Kor and his Metal Heads. But infighting between three factions inside the city have caused quite a bit of chaos. Meanwhile people are getting distrustful toward Jak's dark powers, not to mention his connections with Kor and Krew. When the city's palace is

destroyed by a metal head attack, Jak is blamed and effectively banished to the wastelands for life. Luckily Daxter plus Jak2 initiate Pecker join our fallen hero out there. But perhaps it's not all bad. The Wastelands is one of the excuses for Naughty Dog to expand the game world - the wastelands boast to be five times the size of Haven City. The free-roaming nature of Jak 2 has been kept as well and vehicles such as Dune Buggies have been added to make your travels a bit easier.

Weapon wise the original four remain while eight new ones have been added. More emphasis has been placed on different types of ammo, introducing a more strategic element to managing your artillery. And Jak keeps acting like a long-eared Padawan as his dark Powers are complimented with more light powers, these being more defensive in nature plus adding other abilities, such as gliding.

Back to the world, Jak will explore a range of places, first on the list being

Spargus, a city made up of those banished from Haven. He'll also visit a Precursor temple, an active volcano, a Metal Head base and eventually even Haven City while it's under siege. In between, of course, sits the vast desert and all the secrets it hides.

To power all of this, Jak 2's engine has been left behind for a new one, able to handle the massive terrain plus a few must-have effects such as bumpmapping, rag-doll physics and cloth dynamics. The world and music is also streamed more smoothly, giving way for a more seamless gaming experience and as you can discern from the screenshots, Jak 3 has been given a major graphical boost. Jak 2 introduced a play dynamic beyond the "collect glowing stuff" norm of platform games and this next game intends to take that even further, giving fans of the series and genre more to look forward to. Call us sold, but the series has yet to disappoint and Jak 3 looks like it will push the bar even higher. N















Sid Meier's Pirates!



eveloper: Firaxis · Publisher: Atari · Supplier: Megarom [011] 234 2680 · Genre: Strategy Adventure

AG has several shrines set up in its bedroom - some for long-gone cartoon characters, others for those junk foods that never made it to the tastes of the mass market. Game developers have their spot too and Sid Meier, godfather of the thinking man's game, has a shrine made out of gold and lemur skins. So sequels bearing his name are always looked upon with great anticipation, but also some anxiety, because we can't get so excited as to forget that they might screw this up.

The fact that Sid himself is working on this does waylay a lot of the fear, though. Seventeen years after its release on the Commodore, the new game is an enhancement in practically every way - bringing back the old features fans loved plus adding new elements that time and technology wouldn't allow for, plus a few new tricks as well. As is usually the case with these remakes, the obvious change is the migration to a 3D engine. The basic game mechanics, though, have changed very little.

You play as a 17th Century captain who navigates the seas, selling his services to whoever pays him the best. By changing your alliance with nations, dabbling in politics and even sinking or saving ships, you alter how the story will flow since these actions impact the region directly. For instance, sinking



ships with supplies for a certain port will leave that destination in trouble, altering how much business they'd be willing to do with you, if any at all. Blockading towns, making peace treaties and even courting the numerous bored daughters of governors is all part of the package as you work towards become a scourge of the seven seas.

The whole point is re-playability every time a player loads up the game, these small choices impact heavily on the dialogue, political, combat and commercial options in the game. To make all of this as streamlined as possible, a lot of work has gone into simplifying controls and combat; the point was to live like a pirate, not get bogged down by battle tactics every corner you take. It also helps encompass the variety of actions in the game: during a game you'll take part in sea battles, find buried treasure, explore islands, sign treaties, steal cargoes and

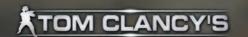
make a lot of enemies, not to mention even more money.

If the game achieves one thing - a modern port of the original title - it's already made its mark. But Firaxis are aiming for a title that will keep old fans happy and introduce new players to the world of sea-bound piracy. After disappointments such as Pirates of the Caribbean, we could definitely use some more swashbuckling action around here. N









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F.E.A.R.





Developer: Monolith · **Publisher:** Vivendi Universal Games · **Supplier:** Nu Metro [011] 340 9345 **Genre:** First Person Shooter · **Release Date:** 2005



11 - 2004 60 NAG

n entire Delta Force team is wiped out when they are sent in to assess the situation in a skyscraper. In situations like this the powers that be send in F.E.A.R. (First Encounter Assault and Recon), an elite combat group with specialist abilities to help in such tough situations. And tough it will be - the DF guys were literally ripped apart...

Monolith return to add another FPS to their impressive resume - the same team that brought us the Alien vs. Predator and No One Lives Forever games is now hard at work on this Pseudo Action-Horror. On the one side there's definitely something rotten in the state of Denmark as paranormal entities take out a squad of elite fighters. On the flipside is your team, and specifically your character a soldier not only adept in ranged combat but packs a mean punch as well. In fact, the protagonist in F.E.A.R. can make flying kicks, lethal punches and disarming baseball slides. This combines fluidly with weapons combat - it's pretty easy to jump into a room, let off a salvo of shots, kick someone in the head and run out, throwing a grenade back for anyone eager to follow you. Okay, that does take some mastering of this new FPS element, but with titles like Chronicles of Riddick already actively exploring the genre beyond it just being a gun protruding from the bottom of your screen, it's great to see more titles experiment with such great success.

Of course you don't need to kick your way through situations as a rule, since run-and-gun tactics will also get the job done. Combined with this is the ability to slow down time. Instead of being a supernatural talent, it's rather to proclaim how much more skilled your character is, since the bullet time effect allows for far more accurate shots. The game retorts by throwing some heavy bad guys at you, each brandishing grenades and automatic rifles. But that's the easy bit, whatever ripped our Delta friends apart is still out there and you can bet it has friends. Men with guns are child's play...

play...
F.E.A.R. uses a proprietary engine (not LithTech) and boasts all the bells and whistles you'd expect (shaders, meshes and magic out of the DirectX 9 bag) plus everyone's favourite party guest: Havok physics. The early build of the game reflected this beautifully with lush interactive, destructible environments and more than enough physics-able objects and opponents to keep any shooter fan happy. The story is still being kept under wraps, but influences from the first Die Hard and Koji Suzuki's Ringu are very obvious - this might sound like a very eclectic union, but it's surprising just how well it works.

It's no surprise that so many journalists rated F.E.A.R. as the game of E3, because the little that was shown looked very impressive and some hands-on time with the same build only enforced this perception. Keep an eye out for F.E.A.R. - it's going to keep you up, one way or another.



Joint Operations: Escalation





Developer: Novalogic · Publisher: Novalogic · Supplier: MegaRom [011] 234 2680 · Genre: Strategy Release Date: Q4 2004

hen Joint Operations arrived on the scene months ago in the form of an announcement, we failed to see the significance - NAG admits that. But the multiplayer addition to Novalogic's unstoppable Delta Force series has been a great hit, so much so that the company did what it does best: expansions. Escalation is aptly named to explain how the Indonesian conflict everyone's currently embroiled in spills over to other Asian countries, meaning there are more bad guys with more weapons taking up more battlefields.

In terms of an expansion pack it's doing everything the proper way: more than 25 new maps, including co-op

and training missions (though you can hardly count training missions as new maps), new buildings in the guise of Radar Stations, enemy bases and airports to blow up, and of course new vehicles, while the hardware inside the title has been expanded with new ceramic armour, weapons and mounted guns for better base defense. If mobility is more of your thing, the new Attack Choppers and Battle Tanks should catch your fancy, while the more frantic at heart will enjoy tearing across dirt paths with the off-road bikes. And mobile SAM sites are an excellent counter-measure to the arrival of airborne firepower, something you'll need to look out for if you opt for the new insertion option: via parachute.

As always it's a bit of a gamble with online games when you add new elements to the conflict, especially in the form of heavy armour vehicles and helicopters that can rain death. Still, with up to 150 players in a game, there's more than enough room to maneuver a tank around, plus our faith in Novalogic has been well placed in the past. Escalation wants to be on shelves as early as mid-November, perhaps as a reaction to Joint Ops' surprising popularity, so it seems to be more of filler than a full-blown campaign expansion. That said, what is being added will be useful and can carry the game for a while still until Novalogic releases another addition to the series and fans can't complain about that.











LEISURE SUIT!

-MACNA CUM LAUDZ-





















Mass A

Games are shifting to a broader market appeal as the industry grows...

he PC game boom that's been expected for some time is happening, at last, and we are seeina products hit the shelves that are far better than the ones we have seen in previous months - in theory

One of the things that is becoming more apparent with new games (some more so than others) is the fact that games seem to be shifting their focus towards a less hardcore, more average-Joe consumer. Take the example of The Sims 2. This title is aimed at a mass market without a doubt, and the signs of this are definitely showing in the game itself. From the mini-game included in the installer to the extensive tutorials and the use of simplified terminology where technical jargon would previously have been used, this EA game screams mass-consumption. Whether gamers like it or not, the

entire industry is being pulled kicking and screaming into the mass market. The elitist attitude that gamers once

displayed will have to disappear, purely because there will be no place for it anymore.

Mass market appeal makes for quite an appealing prospect, at least as far as publishers go, purely because it equates directly into higher sales figures.

How this phenomenon will affect the games we see in future remains to be seen. It stands to reason that a wider approach to shifting games off of shelves will mean that more checks and balances will have to be put in place to ensure that the content of the titles are "friendlier" to the public. This is converse to the fact that violent (or controversial) titles tend to be more popular, with the more hardcore gamer market at least. This market does make up a fairly substantial amount of sales figures, so it will be interesting to see how the manufacturers and distributors tackle this issue.

Right, enough talking. On with the reviews...

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Editor's Choice

Once in a while, a game comes along that displays certain qualities which our editor likes. Pretty colours and loud noises help...



Platform

Platforms are described using icons rather than just plain old words. For those of you who don't know (shame on you) they are, left to right, top to bottom: Game Boy Advance, GameCube, N-Gage, PC, PS2 and Xbox.













As we said, our scores range from one to one hundred, with a score of fifty being considered average - because we can. Live with it.



PlayStation。2 👃







The Sims 2





Suggested Retail Price: R 299.00 · Developer: Maxiz · Publisher: Electronic Arts Supplier: EA Africa [011] 536 8300 · Genre: People Simulator · Reviewer: Walt Pretorius

Minimum Specifications: Pentium 3 800MHz · 256 MB RAM · 8 x CD ROM · 32 MB Video Card · 3.5 GB HDD

ow exactly do you make a sequel to the world's most successful PC game? That question must have plagued Will Wright and his Sims team as they undertook the whole Sims 2 creation process. But the brain behind the original game was obviously not one that would be rattled by this daunting prospect - the long awaited sequel to The Sims is here, and it certainly exceeds the mark set by the first title series.

At first glance, the most obvious change to be implemented in Sims 2 is a massive graphical overhaul. Everything looks better, to put it simply. Every aspect of the visual side of the game has been given a major boost.

This, of course, makes a massive difference - new players and fans of the previous series alike will likely spend a lot of time exploring the look of the game, with its improved (and far more individualistic) characters, enhanced lighting effects, true 3D capabilities and a whole lot more.

The next aspect of the game that will show a degree of change is the actual game dynamic. For the most part, we're not really dealing with anything new; sims still have needs, and the player still has to take care of those needs. This is a major part of the game, just like before. In fact, most of the player's time will probably be spent taking care of the eight basic needs that every sim has. Not much new

there. But sims now have goals and drives, which translate into each individual sim's aspirations. To put it simply, sims now have wants and fears in addition to needs, and a good player will be mindful of these new aspects of the game; they can quite literally be the difference between a successful sim and a dead one. So while the "doll house cross Tamagotchi" style of looking after your simulated people still applies to the game, it has become so much more interesting, due to the fact that you need to keep the sim happy in terms of needs and wants. These are two separate facets of the game. A sim whose needs are taken care of can still perform poorly, due to unfulfilled desires.







What drives you?

A new aspect to individual sims are their aspirations. These are goals and drives that they try achieve during their lives. While young sims have the aspiration of growing up, adult sims can have one of five aspirations chosen for them by the player

Romance - This sim wants romance... lovers and loving type stuff. Basically, a

Family - One of the easier aspirations (if both sims in a relationship have it) means that sims want a house, a car, 2.5 kids... and a dog when that expansion happens.. Knowledge - This sim wants to learn things. They may be bookish, but they cer-

ainly do know a lot of stuff.. Popularity - Whether famous or infamous. this sim wants to be well known... no matter what the cost

Fortune - Money makes this sim's world go round... which equates to a lot of hard vork and minimal partying.



Add to this that the game now has an almost definite time limit (because sims have finite life spans) and things get interesting. But more about that later.

Giving sims what they want (in terms of their aspirations) results in rewards being made available. These rewards take the form of devices that assist the sims in the game, ranging from money trees to thinking caps and even potions that make the sim live longer. Using these rewards can make all the difference between a good sim and a great

Another aspect of the overall game dynamic now lies in the fact that Sims 2 is more about building "dynasties" than just running the lives of a few virtual people. This adds somewhat to the "soap-opera" feel that Maxis built into the game (and promote players in taking part as well) as well as prolonging the game overall.

Basically, it works like this: the longer your family is around, the more successful they become. Children benefit from the work their parents put in (much like in the real world) and carry the legacy of the family further.

To reinforce the whole "family feel," Maxis instituted a system of genetics that results in children resembling their parents. This is no mean feat when one considers that the included Body Shop system for creating new sims allows for virtually any facial variable to be adjusted... sims can look exactly the way you want them to look. The genetics takes aspects of the biological parents of the sims and applies them to any offspring. Of course the same rule does not apply for adopted children.

The family situation serves sims very well, and this is even more apparent within this new title. Social and fun ratings benefit from family activities, but the new sims lifecycle (increased to five stages as opposed to the three of the

As time goes by...

Sims now go through five (well, technically six if you count infancy) life stages. These are toddler, child, teenager, adult and elderly, and each poses its own challenges to the player. Part of the attention to detail that Maxis paid Sims 2 comes down to the fact that facial aspects created for a sim (whether by the player or genetically) alter according to the age of the sim while still retaining the sims overall look









original game) also assists younger sims because they can concentrate on getting something of a running start towards adulthood while still enjoying the support of their family (in terms of income.) Once a sim has entered the child stage of life, they can begin learning the skills that are necessary for a successful adult sim. These skills relate directly to the sims' careers (and a few other aspects of their lives) and getting started on them early makes things easier when the sim finally grows up.

And once that sim has grown up, it's time for work. Sims 2 offers relatively few career paths (there will be more in the expansions, of course.) One of our favourite changes made to the way that sims go about their working lives is the fact that they now get days off. Sims get set days off each week, earn paid vacation days and even get maternity leave while pregnant. And once they become elderly, they can retire (with a steady income each day.) This aspect of the career path means that smart players can advance their sims more quickly by taking advantage of their time off to improve them.

Of course, the whole social aspect comes into play once again. Sims are gregarious by nature - they need other sims around them. Relationship building within the game is crucial to sim success, but is thankfully easier than in previous incarnations of the title. Sims fall in love, too... hetero and homosexual unions are all possible.

As you can see, there are quite a lot of major changes to the way the game works. But the true beauty of this title lies in the little details; the way sims move and aesticulate when talking or dancing, the way they go through more detailed motions of doing various things, the way the PC they play on actually displays game footage, and so on. All the new little details can result in a player used to the original title being quite swept away in discovering all the new minute details of the title.

So that's what you can expect. But what's the game like to play? Those that played the sims before will notice that while the game is largely similar to the previous game, there is a lot more



One of the Sims 2 biggest selling points is the fact that families, complete with genetics, can be formed. The genetics used by the engine are fairly complex. Using facial aspects of both parents, the engine determines what children will look like - creating the kind of familial recognition that we see in real life. Yep, ugly parents equals ugly kids...







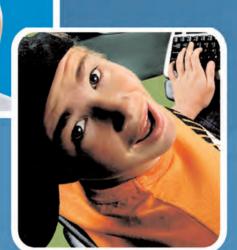


Building better looking sims is easy with the included version of bodyshop that ships with the Sims 2, and forms part of the sim creation process. While you can only decide on one of three body types, sims are facially exactly what you want them to be. The player can modify every aspect of the face, starting with preset models to work from



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detail. Interactions (whether with objects or other sims) offer far more options. Cooking a meal, for example, means choosing which dish to cook as opposed to just telling your sim to cook. Conversely, as far as buying and decorating options go, the game features far less than what was available at the end of the original Sims series (if you added all the add-ons, of course.) While objects now come with a variety of colours, for example (one chair might be available in six colour variants) there are fewer objects to choose from. This is, of course, because there are the inevitable slew of Sims 2 addons comina.

On the whole, we found the game somewhat easier to play than the origi-

nal Sims, and a lot more fun too. Fans of the original will almost certainly love it, and its increased appeal should win many new converts over to the series too.

What we're dealing with is, quite simply, one of the slickest game packages we have ever seen. Sure, that's probably directly due to the fact that Electronic Arts was well aware of the gold mine they were sitting on and went at this one with both guns blazing, but if we're getting good product, do we really care? In the end the game offers the player massive amounts of fun and, because it has no predefined goals (other than what the players makes for themselves) it is possibly the most re-playable game in history. The

actual game dynamic can get tedious after extended periods of play, but once you stop you want to get back to the game as soon as possible... yes, it's that addictive. The Sims 2 won't be everybody's cup of tea, but with a million copies sold internationally in ten days, it obviously appeals to a large number of people. Love it or hate it, The Sims 2 has got to be one of the best games we've seen in a good long time.

The people simulator is back, and it's better than ever!

91





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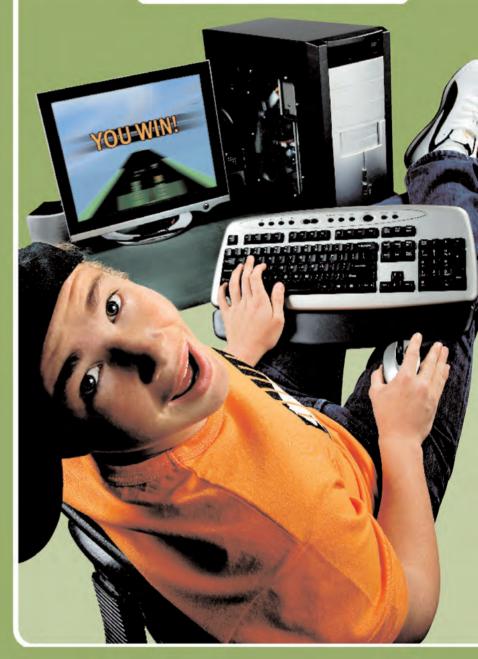
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Leading the way to Winning



Call of Duty: United Offensive

ow exactly do I put across Call of Duty? The original game earned me a reputation of keyboard bashing, thanks to my flash tantrums and heavy-fisted handling of hardware [diplomatically put, Ed] as I tried to fight through the intense levels. In reality the game wasn't that hard once you got to grips with guick-saving and loading often (though I still insist that playing anything less than Veteran is a waste), but it was a lot of fun.

United Offensive, this time helmed by Return to Castle Wolfenstein developers Grey Matter, keeps that tradition going beautifully, provided though that you want more of the chaotic intensity of the first game. Those who finished the first definitely will and it's almost a prerequisite to have done so, because UO is tough, featuring far more enemies, tougher objectives and stacks of events where it's you versus Hitler's tanks while fighting off storming Nazis from every side.

The familiar three-tier approach is back: you start off in an American squad, clearing towns and houses in the European countryside. These levels could be called repetitive, but the action is kept tight and fast, so you never notice it that much; besides, the scenery changes often enough and a cross-country ride early into the campaign gets the blood pumping thick and fast. To balance this, the British segment sees you start in a bomber, where you run back and forth between gunner positions, shooting down attacking Messerschmitt fighters. At this stage it's obvious that the Quake 3 engine has once again been pushed beyond its expected capacity - not bad for an expansion to a game not exactly known for its graphical prowess. Yes, it's a dated engine, but it still does the job very well. After this section it's back to more routine house-clearing, a nice break from the larger assault-anddefend battles the Americans endure in the game.

But just as with the first game, the real gem is to reach the Russian campaign, based around the Battle of Kursk. The previous campaigns really only serve as a means to prepare you for these tough-as-nails battles, including some of the most harrowing and intensive battles I've ever seen in any FPS, but as

Suggested Retail Price: R 199.00 · Developer: Grey Matter · Publisher: Activision · Supplier: MegaRom [011] 234 2680 · Genre: First Person Shooter · Reviewer: James Francis

Minimum Specifications: Pentium 3 700MHz · 128 MB RAM · 8 x CD ROM · 32 MB Video Card · 1.4 GB HDD

a reward you do get to spend an entire level driving a tank, blowing the Nazis and their hardware sky high.

There's enough here to keep fans happy, including Capture the Flag and Domination modes, as well as maps, added to the multiplayer. If I have to fault UO, it's too technical, not following the more gutsy spirits of Call of Duty - trying to move out of the designated fighting paths tend to get you kill by phantom bullets or shells. Still, it's close enough to be more of the same and creative enough to breathe more life into the popular shooter. And my keyboard is fine - I managed some restraint this time... just barely.





A solid expansion to CoD, it can be a bit too technical, but it's still worth the ride











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Warhammer 40 000: Dawn of War





uggested Retail Price: R 299 · Developer: Relic · Publisher: THQ · Supplier: WWE [011] 462 0150 Genre: pal Time Strategy · Reviewer: Walt Pretorius

Minimum Specifications: Pentium 3 1.4GHz · 256 MB RAM · 4 x CD ROM · 32 MB Video Card · 2 GB HDD

his is the game, based on the popular Warhammer 40 000 tabletop war game franchise, that they should have made all along. What better way to pay homage to tabletop war gaming than with a real time strategy title, and who better to handle it than Relic. This development team has really taken what was a seriously flagging licence and turned it into something worth looking at with just this one game.

From the outset, Dawn of War doesn't pull punches; an excellent intro movie leads into frenetic game play that will entertain and challenge almost everyone who has a penchant for real time strategy titles. Sadly, the game has only one single player campaign, but all four races are available for multiplayer purposes.

Dawn of War is a far quicker game that many other RTS titles. Getting soldiers out is relatively fast, and "turtling" in your base is something that just won't win you the game. This is largely due to the fact that resources are aenerated by holding strategic points on the map. Sure, fortifying your base and not moving much may still result in near acceptable resource gathering, but the more aggressive approach of going out and taking things is far more likely to yield beneficial results for the player.

The overall game dynamic is designed to keep players on the move. Squads can be reinforced in the field, and available weapon upgrades can also be applied away from the main base. The entire game works on a squad based system (meaning you build a squad of soldiers, instead of one at a time) and takes important factors like degree of cover and squad moral into account when battles ensue.

The four races (Space Marines, Orks, Eldar and Chaos Marines) are well balanced and exquisitely modelled. Players in a multiplayer environment can even customise their army's colour

A decent Warhammer 40 000 game has been a very long time coming. That game is here at last, offering the player a very quick and enjoyable title. Good graphics and excellent sound add to the title overall, and the near standard control system and friendly GUI make playing the game a breeze leaving more room for that all important strategy aspect. A very versatile camera allows the player to get "down and dirty" with his units.

On the whole, this is a great RTS, and definitely the best Warhammer franchise title ever.

At last, a Warhammer 40 000 game that doesn't suck!



Dawn of War has solid game mechanics and some impressive visuals, but the true shine of its grace comes in the form of its sheer energy. Usually a Real Time Strategy is an almost docile affair, buildings are constructed in a melancholic fashion and units do what they need to do without a fuss or flare.

Dawn of War is the opposite of this norm. Everything in Dawn of War happens with force and sheer chutzpah. Not content with simply building their base, the Space Marines actually drop their buildings in from orbit with the expected slam of metal into terrain. The Orks air-drop the raw materials the snotlings need to build, leaving a trail of destruction across the landscape. Chaos and Elder are slightly more sedate, summing their buildings in an eerie manner that makes a nice juxtaposition to the chaos of the other races.

Units themselves also adhere to hyperkinetic ideology of the game, mowing down opponents with flare articulated by gunfire and melee weapons. When two armies clash there is a slew of contextual animations that play out, Mechs will grab units and slam them against the ground or throw them into the air, Marines will give some Orks the 'coup-de-grace' via a bullet to the head execution style while the Orks make sure each Space Marine goes home with enough lead in them to start a pencil factory. While one might think all this extra 'fluff' on the animation level might get in the way of the game, it simply doesn't.

Going back to conventional WarCraft seems very sedate all of a sudden.



Burnout 3: Takedown





Suggested Retail Price: R 499.00 · Developer: Criterion · Publisher: Electronic Arts Supplier: EA Africa [011] 516 8300 · Genre: Arcade Racer · Reviewer: Adam Liebman

Minimum Specifications: 1-2 Players · 81KB memory · Analog compatible: all buttons · Vibration compatible

or anyone as yet unfamiliar with the Burnout series of racing games, the concept is a rather simple one - drive dangerously if you want to succeed. Set across three different continents (namely the USA, Europe and the Far East), Burnout 3 provides a plethora of circuits along which to race, usually against five opponents, with the primary twist being that each and every track is, in fact, a portion of a city, populated with numerous vehicles, each going about their daily business. Needless to say, that's quite far from being a recipe for safe racing, and weaving in and out of traffic at breakneck speeds (starting to sound much like a typical daily South African journey to or from work, right?) is more or less the crux of playing Burnout 3. Of course, things do become slightly more complicated than that - your vehicle also has the capability of applying a turbo boost, provided your boost meter is full - as you might suspect, the boost meter is filled by reckless driving, with travelling in the oncoming lane, drifting around corners, near-misses with other vehicles, and tailgating your opponents all contributing to providing you with that extra burst of speed. Up to now, the play dynamic seems very similar to the last game in the series, but there are a few new additions that make a rather substantial difference to the end product.

As the game's title suggests, Burnout 3 places a much heavier emphasis than its predecessors on crashing - or more specifically, on causing your opponents to crash. In the previous title, ramming your opponent into an oncoming truck provided little more than a lead of a few extra seconds, and a fair deal of evil satisfaction. In Burnout 3, however, you're quite heavily rewarded for causing your opponents to wipe out. Each "takedown" you score not only fills your boost meter, but also extends it, up to a maximum of four times its original size, which can prove to be the difference between glorious victory and crushing defeat. In case that's not enough, the game also keeps a running tally of how many takedowns you've scored, and as you reach certain milestones, you're rewarded with the unlocking of new vehicles.

The essence of Burnout 3 is found in

the "World Tour" mode - you start off racing in the compact car series (and don't let the name deceive you, the vehicles are certainly no slouches), with only a few events available. As you complete events, new vehicles in that class, and new events, are unlocked. The different events include the traditional race (set over anywhere from one to three laps), face-offs (a one-onone against a computer controlled opponent, with unlocking a new vehicle as the prize), eliminator events (a fivelap race, with the racer in last place eliminated after each lap), road rage events (where the objective is to score a specific number of takedowns before the time-limit expires, or your vehicle is wrecked), and time-trials (where you race against no opponents, with the objective being to complete the circuit within a time-limit). After completing all the events in a particular series, you gain access to that series' Grand Prix

event, which consists of three races. If you secure enough points throughout the three races, you'll unlock the first few events of the next series. In case you're wondering, the different series include compact, muscle, sports and super, each progressively faster (and more difficult) than the last. Furthermore, each series has roughly 8

different vehicles in it, once you've unlocked them all, each with different weights and top speeds. In addition to the races, though, there are also crash events, each of which provides you with a pre-determined vehicle and a stretch of road leading up to an intersection it's up to you to figure out how to crash your vehicle in the manner most likely to cause the most damage. It's similar to the crash mode of the last title in the series, but once again there are a few new touches - most notably, there are a number of collectible power-up icons along the way, which will either provide







you with an instant boost, a cash bonus (to the amount of damage you cause), or which will multiply your final damage score. This turns each different junction into quite a complicated puzzle, and you're sure to spend much time trying to figure out how best to complete each one. And to top it all off, the crashes are extremely cool to watch.

Visually, Burnout 3 combines very well detailed car models and environments with an incredible sense of speed - it all makes for a very thrilling experience. The audio is well done too, with realistic effects, and a reasonable soundtrack, though the attempt to make the soundtrack feel more like a

radio-station is rather poorly done, and the DJ ends up being more annoying than entertaining. Ultimately, though, it's not enough to detract from the overall experience - the only way to accurately describe Burnout 3 is as one of the most charged and exciting titles to emerge in recent memory. It's exceedingly easy to just pick up and play, yet surprisingly difficult to master, and almost impossible to put down - truly, a non-stop adrenaline rush from the first instant, and its appeal is certainly not limited to fans of the racing genre.

Adrenaline-charged, no-holdsbarred racer, with very widespread appeal - not to be missed

92









Chessmaster: 10th Edition





Suggested Retail Price: R 299.00 · Developer: Ubisoft · Publisher: Ubisoft Supplier: MegaRom [011] 234 2680 · Genre: Chess · Reviewer: Iwan Pienaar

Minimum Specifications: Pentium 3 450MHz · 128MB RAM · 4 x CD ROM · 16 MB Video Card · 540 MB HDD

laying chess might not be to everybody's liking. Many people would rather watch paint dry than sit through a televised chess match. Judging by the popularity of real-time strategy titles, this should not be the case as chess is often used as an example to teach strategy lessons.

In fact, to have a working knowledge of chess was a prerequisite for generals long ago. It is said that no other game, if you can call chess a game, challenges the mind in the way chess does. Like it or loathe it, there is no denying the fact that chess is here to stay.

The tactical nature of chess might lead many to think that it would be an ideal topic for computer titles. While this is true to some extent (the Chessmaster franchise has sold over

five million copies), getting developers and publishers interested in such a niche offerina is difficult. Now in its tenth edition, Chessmaster has proven the sceptics wrong and the market for quality chess titles is stronger today than ever before.

Divided into three parts (Fun, Learn and Play), Chessmaster is suited for any chess player. The Fun modes of play are designed to teach children chess-playing basics. Kids can also play against low-ranked opponents using humorous animated chess boards. Puzzles that allow children to implement what they learnt complete the Fun section. The Learn area is for adult chess players. The Academy provides a series of comprehensive lessons. More experienced players will find the Openings section that teaches

over 2 000 different openings especially invaluable. True to form,

Chessmaster also has a database of more than 800 famous chess matches that are fascinating to watch. Rounding out the title is the Play mode. Players can compete in unranked or ranked matches, compete online and even play in tournaments. As added incentive, winning in ranked matches unlocks different types of chess sets and pieces.

Quite simply, Chessmaster is the game to get if you are serious about chess.

The Chessmaster franchise celebrates its tenth anniversary with a band





Famous Matches

One of the features of Chessmaster that I really enjoyed was the section in the Kids Academy showcasing 12 of Josh Waiztkin's chess matches. He gives a fascinating commentary on why certain moves were made and takes a look at alternative moves with its implications. Each match examines different aspects of chess play and provides the gamer with valuable insight on some of the theoretial aspects of chess









Shellshock: Nam '67



elcome to Nam, rookie! Entering your first tour in Vietnam, you are soon thrown into the deep end as you head out on a routine patrol in Shellshock, a third-person shooter that plans to look at the darker, more atrocious part of the Vietnam War. You play through fifteen levels, fighting the Vietcong, cleaning out villages and tunnels and defending hotspots, eventually joining the special ops a few missions into the game, all while getting closer to King Kong, a infamous North Vietnam commander reputed to execute captured prisoners himself. The story is being handed to you through grainy cut-scenes, some including more macabre sights like rotting heads and impaled Gls.

At least, that's the ideal that Shellshock would have wanted. But the game itself is a bit like a clichéd Vietnam movie, full of swearing, mild

Suggested Retail Price: R 299.00 · Developer: Guerrilla · Publisher: Eidos · Supplier: MegaRom [011] 234 2680 · Genre: Action Shooter · Reviewer: James Francis

Minimum Specifications: Pentium III 1 GHz · 256 MB RAM · DVD ROM · 32 MB Video Card · 3 GB HDD

gore and shallow characters. To compliment this, Guerilla decided to throw wave after wave of fighters at you, all while you need to complete objectives that change as you progress. Since the enemy fighters can re-spawn in certain areas, achieving these objectives are often urgent. The Vietnamese fighters are nothing to scoff at either, but mainly because they hide behind trees and undergrowth, screaming endearing terms like "Yankee go home!" in heavy accents (apart from the odd cut-scene and confused villager, you never hear any regional dialect). All this is rounded off with stealth missions, a variety of weapons and a base camp where you can buy drugs, postcards and prostitutes. Shocking indeed.

I hate to say this, but not only does Shellshock rely on its controversial material to boost interest, it actually fails to do any of that. The swearing is passé - while I could call it excessive, it's a common trait in some other

Vietnam games as well, so no shock value there (plus, they swear in Full Spectrum Warrior). Seeing the odd GI step into a trap doesn't do it either, and even though the occasional cut scene features a suicide or execution, it's nothing you haven't seen in Platoon or Full Metal Jacket before. At one point villagers run away and the platoon fires on them, but it has little impact.

This is probably because the game lacks any real character, or characters for that matter. The game models have no ambient animation and their mouths tend to flap when they speak not keeping track of the words - Half-Life did it more impressively. You never get into the story and the repetitive play dynamic is as by-the-numbers as you could hope to get.

Shellshock is boring, unoriginal and not even gory or risqué enough to qualify as truly controversial, instead succumbing to a whole lot of stereotypes. It's not worth it.

A by-the-numbers, uninspired and shallow shooter





















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PlayStation。2







Soldner: Secret Wars



et in the not-too-distant future, Soldner: Secret Wars sees you takina control of a sauad of elite and presumably highlytrained mercenary operatives, fighting an assortment of battles all over the world, the idea being that open war between nations has become a thing of the past, and all conflicts are now dealt with by means of subterfuge and stealth rather than good, old fashioned, face-to-face mud-slinging (or even nuke-slinging, for that matter). Of course, the first step to succeeding as one of these select Soldners is looking the part, and in that respect, the game doesn't disappoint - your character's appearance is customisable in virtually every respect, from the hat right down to the boots. And while we're on the subject of variety, Soldner, to its credit, doesn't appear to be lacking in many areas - boasting more than 60 varieties of firearm (not to mention other nifty

Suggested Retail Price: R 299.00 · Developer: Wings Simulation · Publisher: JoWooD Supplier: WWE [011] 462 0150 · Genre: Strategy · Reviewer: Adam Liebman

 $\textbf{Minimum Specifications:} \ \ \text{Pentium 4 1.4GHz} \cdot 256 \ \ \text{MB RAM} \cdot 4 \ \text{x CD ROM} \cdot 32 \ \text{MB Video Card} \cdot 1 \ \text{GB HDD}$

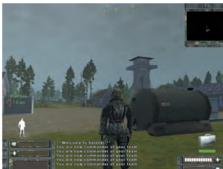
instruments of death, such as knives and missile launchers), and 70 different vehicles, including tanks, ieeps and helicopters. Needless to say, there's no such thing as a free lunch, and if you want to play with the fun toys, you'll need to earn enough cash during your missions to buy them. Unfortunately, this leads to a number of unwanted complications, the primary one being that you are given very little idea of what you're blowing your hard-earned cash on until you've bought it - unless you happen to know the specifications of whatever gadget you've got your eye on, purchasing things is rather like playing the lottery in that it's more or less all guesswork: the only way to establish a gun's ammo capacity, a vehicle's seating capacity, or any other useful information is to shell out for the thing. And, once you've done that, the game embarks on somewhat of a downward spiral: piloting almost every

vehicle is hampered by rather severe control issues, and engaging in combat doesn't improve things - the concept of Al in this game seems to refer to "absent intelligence" rather than "artificial intelligence", since the cumulative intellectual capabilities of both your team-mates and enemies is only just enough to rival that of a typical houseplant, leading to much frustration. Mediocre graphics and average sound further compound Soldner's problems, and it becomes difficult to find any saving grace for the game - it's a nice concept, but the execution of it, unfortunately, is ultimately far more frustrating than it is entertaining. \textstyle \tex

Good concept, but seriously flawed - too frustrating to be taken seriously













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Silent Hill 4: The Room

oom 302 becomes your personal hell as you find yourself unable to leave the room, the chains that bar the door from the inside certainly present a problem. Yet the massive occult hole in your bathroom makes for an easy exit to eerie alternate versions of the city of Ashfield devoid of human life. On occasion, a brief trip to the woods surrounding a town called Silent Hill is also in order.

Silent Hill 4, oddly enough, seems more of a side story than a continuation of the series. There are very few references to the prequels and they're extremely easy to miss. Returning to the psychological trend of scares set by Silent Hill 2, 4 simultaneously throws out most of the existing formula set by the prequels. Guns and convenient save points have all but been removed and at almost every corner lay invulnerable enemies. For the most part, running away from everything is in order.

You spend most of the game operating out of Room 302 which serves as a save point, place to store items and a handy health-regenerating area. The holes in the walls let you access one 'World' at a time, each of which represent one stage in the mystery that keeps you trapped in the room.

The new Room system is both a blessing and a curse. The idea of a safe haven is great for setting the scene, but since the room is the only save point it gets less and less convenient to get back to it as the game progresses. Each World is packed with the expected freak show, this time around the theme being 'things jumping out of walls and dropping from the ceiling'. An empty room is usually a bad thing.

The lack of guns make things difficult although the new melee system that lets you charge up your swing is decent enough to send most monsters flying away, giving you time to run.

Something very vital is missing from the central plot of the game, personality being the culprit. Each previous Silent Hill protagonist had some baggage to bring to the table yet in Silent Hill 4 lead character Henry is an almost entirely blank slate. You learn nothing about him other than his neighbours don't know him. Halfway through the game his lack of reaction to everything he sees becomes quite

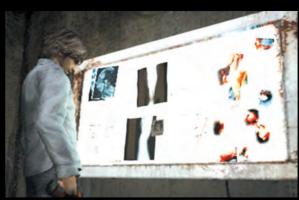
ad Retail Price: R 489.00 · Developer: Konami · Publisher: Konami · Ster Kinekor [011] 445 7900 · **Genre:** Survival Horror · **Reviewer:** Ed Dracon sifications: 1 Player · 200KB Memory · Vibration Compatible · Analog Compatible

macabre.

It's good to see the designers taking risks and experimenting with the formula, even the graphical updates are quite impressive. As far as the series goes, Silent Hill 4 is indeed scary but lacks the punch needed to set it apart. N

A hit for fans yet missing something vital to the series.















1945 | & ||





PlayStation 2

Suggested Retail Price: R 199.00 · Developer: PlayIT · Publisher: PlayIT · Supplier: WWE [011] 492 0150 Genre: Arcade Action · Reviewer: Ed Dracon

Minimum Specifications: 1- 2 Players · No Memory Required · Analog Compatible

n the past, then arcade-game centric Psikyo gained a reputation for quality arcade shooters such as 1945 and stayed in the hearts of fans for a generation. Now both 1945 and its sequel are available in their original pristine states for home consumption on the PlayStation 2. The faithful translation is both its blessing and its curse, as with most 'oldies repackaged' it seems. Everything is intact, right down to the old school pixel graph-

ics and simplistic game dynamics. This 1:1 reproduction unfortunately leaves the player wanting some modern conventions and perhaps just a few small touch-ups to the effects and/or graphics.

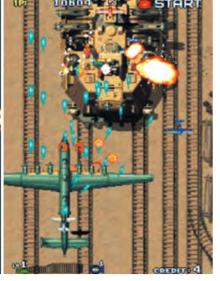
Some might consider it heresy to wish to tamper with a classic, but it's not like we're suggesting colour in Casablanca. Put simply, a little digital enhancement could go a long way in bringing 1945 to the present. The lack of any such enhancements however essentially puts 1945 in the 'Not Applicable' scoring category, as reviewing the

game now based on it's outdated merits would be akin to scoring Pacman. By no accounts does that mean 1945 is a bad game, it's simply a game that's already seen it's time and that time has past. The casual gamer might have their interest piqued but only fans of the series will be seriously interested.

A classic in every sense of the word, including 'outdated. Only fans would enjoy.











Wings of War



ere's something we don't see too often - an arcade style flight simulator. Actually, calling Wings of War a flight simulator may be a little too generous, at least from a technical perspective. While the game may feature a fair degree of historical accuracy, the title is far too arcade-like in nature to be any kind of simulator.

This doesn't make the game any less fun, of course. In truth, it's great fun, in a swash-buckling kind of way, as you

pound your way through vast missions

Suggested Retail Price: R 199.00 · Developer: Silver Wish · Publisher: Gathering Supplier: MegaRom [011] 234 2680 · Genre: Arcade Action · Reviewer: Walt Pretorius

Minimum Specifications: Pentium 4 1 GHz · 128 MB RAM · 8 x CD ROM · 32 MB Video Card · 1 GB HDD

chasing power ups and facing huge numbers of enemies.

The game can get a little too much in terms of challenge at times - a sort of "take on twenty-five enemies with your trashed plane" kind of scenario - but overall it is great fun. The graphics are good and the controls are effective (although quite unrealistic every now and then.) Varying camera angles allow the player to play in various view modes (to take advantage of the game's many different kinds of missions) and long missions provide many

hours of play.

Wings of War is the kind of title you play for fun, not for realism. The planes in this World War One simulator are far more capable than their real world counterparts, which some purists may find annoying. N

An arcade flight simulator that provides a lot of fun if not much









Besieger







Suggested Retail Price: R 279.00 · Developer: Primal Software · Publisher: Dreamcatcher Supplier: WWE [011] 462 0150 · Genre: Real Time Strategy · Reviewer: Walt Pretorius

Minimum Specifications: Pentium 3 1GHz · 256 MB RAM · 8 x CD ROM · 32 MB Video Card · 1.5 GB HDD

ith so many real time strategy titles on the market, games really need to bring something new to the table. While at first glance Besieger attempts to do this, the fact is that the game simply rehashes older concepts.

With only two races available for play (which are remarkably similar to each other) the game does not allow for a wide variety of play options. In fact, one game of Besieger feels pretty much like another, no matter which way you go about it. It does feature a good number of buildings and units, though, and its military unit production is fairly fun - every military unit must be made



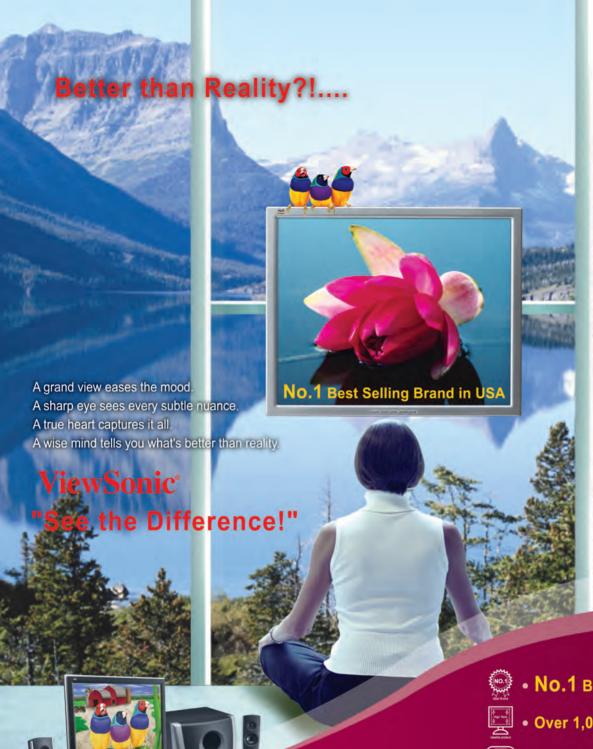
from a worker unit. This makes the management side of army building quite interesting, but unit production can be painfully slow. The aerial units are a nice touch, but seem out of place in a game that seems to have something of a historical grounding. And despite its name, destroying any kind of settlement in Besieger is a very tough task - bordering on impossible.

The game isn't bad to look at, and the sound isn't awful. The controls are fairly good. These elements point to besieger's biggest problem: the game is solidly average. In a market where some pretty big titles are hitting the shelves, Besieger does not do enough to shine.

There will, as there always is with this kind of game, be something of a Besieger following, but the game is hardly destined to be a smash hit. N

A fun game, but certainly not a huae hit!

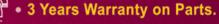








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Yu-Gi-Oh! The Duelists of the Roses

PlayStation 2

or years now Kazuki Takahashi's 'Yu-Gi-Oh!' series has aarnered hordes of fans and then some. The word 'cult' springs to mind, really. The 'Duelists of the Roses' is a one or two player card battle game, meant to compliment and run in tandem with the real-world trading card game (a few rare cards are actually included in the box). Set in the European medieval era, the player assumes the role of a nameless card duellist from contemporary times, sucked into the past to help tilt a

DECK DE 101 V 5 Dark Magician Type 🌉 SPE Attr 🔠 ATK 2500 DEF 2100 Ancient Brain Current Rank Deck Cost Basic Info Power-up Card

Suggested Retail Price: TBA · Developer: Konami · Publisher: Konami Supplier: Ster Kinekor [011] 445 7900 · Genre: Strategy · Reviewer: Ed Dracon Minimum Specifications: 1 - 2 Players · 250KB Memory · Analog compatible · Vibration compatible

conflict between two factions.

Fans are here to see 3D Polygon reenactments of their favourite monsters so little effort has been spent on things like plot. New to the series, the sevenby-seven battlefield grid takes into account terrain and other variables that, in conjunction with each card's unique attributes, can expand or impede a player's deck from winning. New 'Leader Cards' that represent the player's life points heighten an already hyper-complex Fusion system making this the most difficult of the series.

Changes/additions to the card game aside, Duelist of the Roses manages to fall horribly short in the one area it desperately needed to shine. The computer opponents during battle are either entirely retarded or seemingly invincible, leaving no room for a smooth difficulty curve. Cutting out the Al and playing against a friend seems to be the best way to enjoy the title, if you like Yi-Gi-Oh. N



A game made specifically for fans of the license, nobody else



Time Crisis: Crisis Zone

monsters, really.

PlavStation 2

Ithough one might have been forgiven for imagining that the era of the light-gun game had passed, Namco, responsible for the wellknown Time Crisis & Point Blank franchises, have dusted the ageing concept off yet again, and the result is Crisis Zone - far from revolutionary, and too short-lived, but it does have a fair degree of nostalgic charm to it... and, of course, it can become insanely addictive. As you might expect, Crisis Zone features the sort of far-fetched storyline typical to this sort of game - in brief, it pits you against legions of terrorists bent on destroying London. The game dynamic also provides little in the way of surprise - it's a standard rail-shooter which sees you blasting everything in sight, stopping only occasionally to cower behind your riot shield in an effort to avoid enemy fire. Of course, simplicity has always been the driving force behind this genre, and the concept works well - although you'll

Suggested Retail Price: R 469.00 · Developer: Namco · Publisher: Namco Supplier: Ster Kinekor [011] 445 7900 · Genre: Shooter · Reviewer: Adam Liebman Minimum Specifications: 1 Player · 80KB Memory · Analog compatible · Vibration compatible Gun-con 2 · Gun-con 45 compatible

need a light-gun to truly enjoy it, the game provides a very fast-paced and exciting experience, even if it isn't particularly intellectually taxing. Sadly, however, the entire experience is rather short-lived (yet fiendishly difficult at times), and despite a large number of locked items, its replay value is rather limited - if a guick bout of mindless destruction floats your boat, then this is just what you're looking for, but it's definitely not for everyone. N

Fast and fun, though lack of replay value gives it only limited









Ghost Master



t took a while, but Ghost Master has finally made it onto Sony's console, as promised. The game basically requires the player to take control of a number of ghosts and try to scare the wits out of a number of humans. Each scenario features a different location, with different humans. While some humans are easy pickings, there are others that have psychic powers that can damage the ghosts the player controls, and there are others that must not be scared away - rather they need to be coaxed into performing certain tasks. This sounds easy enough, but the energy you need to do the coaxing can only be gained from scar-

While Ghost Master on the PC proved quite challenging, this PS2 version seems to be even harder at times. The game pre-assigns the team of ghosts needed for each scenario, and the actual scenarios themselves are quite a bit tougher than their PC based counterparts.

While most management titles don't really work on the PS2 as well as they do on the PC, Ghost Master is a very slick and well presented game which affords the player a large degree of control. Perhaps it's playability on the PS2 stems from the almost puzzle-like nature of the game - the player needs to figure out the right combination of actions to achieve success in each scenario, after all.

Good graphics and a surprisingly competent control system compliment this title, making it one of the more fun games available for the PS2. Fun doesSuggested Retail Price: R 499.00 · Developer: Sick Puppies · Publisher: Empire Supplier: WWE [011] 462 1050 · Genre: Strategy · Reviewer: Walt Pretorius

Requirements: 1 Player · 360KB Memory · Vibration compatible · Analog compatible

n't necessarily equate to easy though be prepared for a game that is far more challenging than you may initially have thought.

A slick and fun ghost management title that's sometimes a little too challenging 64









Tech Musings: The power of One









words james francis

ngularity is a pretty damn powerful concept. It essentially means one of a kind, but it also indicates that point where there can only be one - where multiple elements stop influencing something. It's a scary concept when you consider that the reality behind it could be very, very real. See, we're facing a phenomenon called Technological Singularity - a point where technology will leave humanity behind. To make it contextual, think of The Terminator - these concepts aren't as far-fetched as we thought. While the Matrix laid claim to a future where robots eventually riot and start their own state, in The Terminator machines become self-sufficient and start taking out the soft fleshy ones.

No, I doubt we'll have to start looking for Sarah Connor and shove her into a safety box. But the concept is realistic. Scientist Vernor Vinge was the first to think up this idea, quite a few decades ago, and it claims that at some point technology will be improving at such a rate that it won't need human intervention to do so, but there are several scenarios that could cause this. The most obvious are super-intelligent computers, though not necessarily sentient ones. Another might be interfaces which are so intimate that they make the user seem super-intelligent. Another concept is in biological science - scientists finding ways to push the human brain well beyond its current capacity. It's often quoted that we only use 10% of the brain, but this is a figure largely misinterpreted and misunderstood. While we don't use all of our brain capacity, don't expect to be lifting space ships out of swamps with your mind. Anyway, it comes down to the creation of great-thanhuman intellect (to plagiarize Vinge's own words) and in turn that easily means even more intelligent creations could stem from that. The big question is where we'll be left in the scheme of things. Some scientists are guite worried about this phenomenon (predicted to start around 2035), prompting a recent conference on the matter where some think we should limit how powerful we make our computers. Of course that's not going to happen. It makes no sense to me: if humans are anything they are tenacious about reaching The Next Big Thing, even if that means blowing up the world. So is this a warning? Are we finally, truly on the proverbial handcart to hell? Not really. I envision a Gibson-like future where we stick ourselves full of cybernetic implants and lungs from Japanese firms, grown in

bioorganic pots. Start work-

ing your magic, baby, Daddy

needs a Schwarzenegger

body with a DVD player

built into my eye socket!



Oakley Thump MP3 sunglasses

Oakley has released an MP3 player built into a pair of sunglasses - inevitable, really. 128MB and 256MB models are available, both supporting MP3 and WMA and connecting via USB2.0. The battery provides about 6 hours of playback. The earpieces are adjustable to the degree that they can be moved out of the way in order to, for example, use a telephone. Of course, Thump MP3 sunglasses boast the full range of Oakley features. www.oakley.com



Nintendo DS release details

Finalised details of the Nintendo DS have been released. The handheld will launch first in United States on the 21st November, followed by a Japanese launch on 2 December. Europe and Australia will see the arrival of the new gadget in the first quarter of next year. The unit will come in at the low end of pricing expectations. Confirmed features include 9-30 metre wireless range, touch screen, voice recognition, stereo speakers and a headphone socket. The unit can be set to a mode that will alert its user when another live DS is within range, and comes bundled with PictoChat, a utility that allows users to draw messages to broadcast to other DS handhelds. Downloading games wirelessly from one DS to another, referred to as Game Sharing, will allow users to engage in multiplayer using only one cartridge. New titles that will be available to DS owners are a Legend of Zelda: Four Swords game, Pokémon Diamond, Pokémon Dash, Final Fantasy III, Super Mario 64, Nintendogs and Feel the Magic: XY-XX.



GBA SP Limited Edition

The 12th November 2004 will see two limited edition GBA SP consoles appearing in retail stores across Europe. Ardent fans can look forward to a gold coloured Zelda GBA with the Triforce symbol on the outside and a fiery red Mario GBA.



Siemens SF65

Apple owners will soon be able to match a phone to their computers. The SF65 from Siemens, set to launch in January, bears a remarkable resemblance to the iPod in terms of aesthetics. In other respects, the phone shares features with the current crop.



Soltek graphic cards

Eurobyte stock a range of extremely well priced Soltek graphic cards ranging in price from R499 for a Radeon 9600SE/GeForce FX5200 128MB to R1999 for a GeForce FX5900 128MB. www.eurobyte.co.za

Thermaltake Silent 775

Thermaltake has released a new Pentium 4 LGA 775 cooler that uses heat-sink pipes to draw heat away from the processor, particularly the core. Its design makes it fairly quiet.







ViewSonic 19-inch gaming LCD

ViewSonic's new VP912b ThinEdge monitor is a 19-inch unit designed with gaming and multimedia applications in mind. It supports resolutions of up to 1280x1024 and has a 12ms response time. ViewSonic has also developed LCD panels with a response time of 8 milliseconds, and will be releasing 17" displays using the technology by the end of the year. The speed improvement has been achieved in two ways: by reducing the "stickiness" of liquid crystals, allowing them to rotate more freely, and by enhancing the current throughput across the LCD panel, encouraging liquid crystals to rotate more quickly.

Sony's Clie PEG-VZ90

Sony has released a new, and extremely expensive, PDA, the PEG-VZ90, which is the first such unit to make use of an OLED screen. It also plays back MPEG-4 video and ATRAC3 and MP3 audio. Its Compact Flash slot will accept a memory or communications card, and it carries built-in 802.11b wireless networking.





H2O Audio SV i700 waterproof MP3 housing

H2O Audio is a company that specialises in producing waterproof housings for digital audio players, primarily those made by iRiver. This latest model is far more compact than any of its predecessors, and supports any player from iRiver's iFP-700 series.



Nokia 6260

New from Nokia is the 6260 smartphone. It is powered by Symbian Operating System on a Series 60 platform and includes all the current crop of features, such as a 176x208 colour screen, digital still/video camera, FM radio, MP3 player, multimedia messaging and GPRS. Connectivity features include Bluetooth, infra-red and USB, allowing backing up of personal data on a PC. Bluetooth further allows use of a separate Bluetooth keyboard that was recently introduced. Quickword and Quickpoint are mobile counterparts to Word and PowerPoint, respectively, allowing a user to view the appropriate type of file. Multimedia Memory Cards can be exchanged without having to turn the phone off.

ASUS WL-HDD Wireless Hard Drive Box

The ASUS WL-HDD wireless hard drive box combines data storage, file sharing and a wireless connection into one single device. It will also allow up to 4 users to save and share data wirelessly at high-speed, 54Mbps data transfer. Weighing a mere 0.2kg it is a perfect device for use with laptops and handhelds. www.asus.com

ATi **HyperMemory**

This new technology from the graphics manufacturer will make use of the high speed of PCI Express to make use of system memory. High-priority data will still be handled by the graphics card's memory. The upshot of this is that the company will be able to ship cards with less memory while providing the same performance. The first cards using HyperMemory will be announced later this year.



LONGHORN SHORTENED

The next generation of the Windows operating system, currently codenamed Longhorn, has been delayed till the second half of 2006, rather than this year as originally planned. Furthermore, some of its features are being removed, including WinFS, the planned new file system that is supposed to make it easier to locate information. Work on this file system is still in progress, however.



Razer Diamondback

Razer continues its tradition of highend mice for hardcore gamers. The new Diamondback has a frame rate of over 6400 per second, 1600 dpi resolution, on-the-fly sensitivity adjustment and an ambidextrous design carrying seven buttons. Additionally, it features an always-on mode whereby the sensor never powers down. www.razerzone.com



New PlayStation 2

Sony has just released a revised version of the PlayStation 2, previously referred to as PStwo. The new model has been made far more compact, with a total volume of about a quarter of the original, and half the weight. The new unit has the Ethernet adapter built in, but sacrifices support for a hard drive. It also carries an infra-red port for the DVD remote control. This new release may well drive down the price of the original PlayStation 2.



tech news

PlayStation Portable media support

Sony Computer Entertainment chief technology officer Masa Chatani has confirmed that the PSP will be out in Japan before the end of 2004 and will be launched worldwide by the end of Q1 2005. The PSP will include support for MP3 and will, when booted up, present users with an interface for managing the clock and save files. The media player itself will use the same Cross Media Bar (XMB) design as the multimedia PSX unit, with load times for booting up games comparable to the PlayStation 2. Additionally, the device will handle video in H.264/AVC format, a new codec that will be used in future DVD systems. The one unknown at this point though is the battery life - much speculation is still going on as to whether this will be the one downfall of the PSP.



Xbox Live. This and other software compatibilities are the very aim of the XNA programme, which will simplify cross-platform game development. Rumours are also floating around that the Xbox 2 project is codenamed Xenon. Whether this will be the official name of

the new console is unconfirmed at this point.

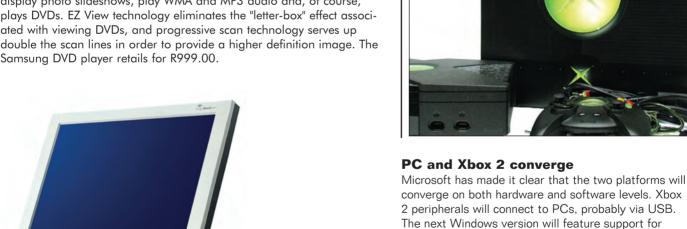
ADSL router from D-Link

New from D-Link is the DSL-G604T ADSL Router with built-in ADSL modem and four-port 10/100 Ethernet switch. The unit also includes an 802,11g wireless LAN that is backward compatible with 802,11b. The router features resilient security functionality, and its internal firmware is upgradeable to ADSL2, ADSL2+ and RE-ADSL2. The DSL-G604T is available from Drive Control Corporation and Pinnacle Micro and should retail at around R1600.00.



Samsung DVD-P347 DVD player

Samsung's new DVD player emphasises digital convergence of various media. The player can read seven different standards of flash memory, display photo slideshows, play WMA and MP3 audio and, of course, plays DVDs. EZ View technology eliminates the "letter-box" effect associated with viewing DVDs, and progressive scan technology serves up double the scan lines in order to provide a higher definition image. The



Hyundai ImageQuest Q17+

This new 17" TFT LCD display boasts a 12 millisecond response time and 500:1 contrast ratio, and has a powerful backlight. The foot of the unit carries a USB hub, and speaker and headphone connectors. The double hinge allows a wide degree of freedom in adjusting the display's facing. www.hyundaiq.com





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New Look Station 2

Supplied by Ster Kinekor [011] 445 7900 R 1 800.00



Is that right? Yes, it's not a camera trick: the new PS2 model is much smaller than its peer, literally being dwarfed by this controller. With the exception of the power connector and videocable, everything else here is stock-standard and compatible with the larger PlayStation 2, including the memory cards.

A new addition is the broadband port, now built into the unit and obviously indicating that Sony is starting to take online play far more seriously. The port can handle any standard broadband connection. Modem ports are also included for gamers who use Analogue modems.





Sony struck serious gold with the PSOne, the smaller version of their long-running PlayStation console. The little unit ended up bringing the console to a ten year lifespan, with Sony only recently stopping manufacturing of the console. So is anyone surprised that they decided a smaller version of the PlayStation 2 is in order? Well, unlike the PSOne, the slim PS2 is a lot smaller than its older peer, boasting 75% less space inside and having more than halved the weight. And that translates into a far more mobile machine, though a large chunk of the power supply is now part of the power cable. It's still 100% PlayStation 2, so it will play all the games the original console can, not to mention that the overhaul means the technology inside has been upgraded, so it's not a bad option for a mobile DVD player either...

Apart from the size, Sony opted to drop the DVD-tray with a top-loader alternative. Apart from less moving parts inside the machine, it also makes it more convenient to load discs, even when the unit is standing vertically. The drive is still DVD capable and should be more stable than former PS2 models, since the lens and reading technology undoubtedly were improved.





It's still a PlayStation 2, so almost everything that works on the one works on the other. Luckily Sony didn't opt to drop the size of their controller, but the Multitap control had to be made smaller to work on the new machine.

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writer: Tom Taylor

Stocking Fillers









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MSI MEGA Player 516

The MEGA Player 561 is an MP3 player with built-in Bluetooth functionality. This model has 256 MB of built in memory and is

light and small enough to carry around with you in a shirt pocket - I found the sound quality to be superb. To me, though, the great thing about this device is its Bluetooth capabilities. The MEGA Player 516 is able to pair with almost all Bluetooth enabled cellular phones (a compatibility chart is included) and can be used as a Bluetooth headset. The LCD will also display the telephone number of the person calling you.



Supplier: Light Edge Technology [021] 510 8270 Internet: www.lightedge.co.za RRP: TBA

LaCie 256 MB Data Watch

This particular product is not brand new to the market and we have seen numerous different models in the past. The LaCie Data Watch is different as it is by far the sexiest of the lot. The watch sports 256 MB of built in flash memory which is accessible via the USB cord that is built into the wrist strap. The watch itself has an analogue face and the box includes an extended USB cord so that the watch can stay on your arm while copying data. This is a great device if you are always searching for your flash disk.



Supplier: DDS [0860] 337 000 Internet: www.directserivces.co.za RRP: TBA

Iomega 128 MB Micro Mini

USB flash disks are without a doubt the handiest gadget any computer enthusiast could own. It is thus not surprising to see the

various shapes and sizes these things are available in. Iomega got the formula spot on with the Micro Mini. This minute USB flash disk is smaller than a Sony Memory Stick and about four times its thickness. Its capacity is 128 MB and internationally a 1 GB version should soon be available. It ships with a keychain attachment and four colour covers making it one of the best accessories to have, just don't loose it.



Supplier: Digital Planet Internet: www.digitalplanet.co.za RRP: R349

MSI MEGA Cache 15

If you have to carry large amounts of data with you then this is the product you need. The MEGA Cache 15 is a USB storage device which has a 1-inch built-in hard drive (take note) it does not use the flash memory that other similar devices use. This

device features 1.5 GB of hard drive space and the USB connector can fold neatly away into the body and there is a data-lock which protects your data from being overwritten. This unit is fast, it was capable of writing my 300 Mb of test data to its disk in under a minute, wow!



Supplier: Light Edge Technology [021] 510 8270 Internet: www.lightedge.co.za RRP: TBA

Kasaku MK-2000 5.1 channel headphones

This is really an innovative product; the Kasaku 5.1 channel headphones sports the ability to produce 6 channel audio from

the two headsets. This is done by actually including four speakers in each headset (centre, rear, front, and a subwoofer in both). These speakers then basically simulate a speaker setup with 5.1 channel surround. The cord of this headset includes a volume control for each channel which is handy to



turn down a particular channel. In the box you will also find an amplifier box which allows you to connect two headsets to a DVD player or your computer. This product works well, to a degree, but nothing can replicate a true 6 channel speaker setup.

Supplier: Wentek International [021] 551 8866 Internet: www.wentek.co.za RRP: R399

Apple iPod mini

This has got to be one of the top stocking fillers this year. The iPod mini follows in its father's footsteps as being the gadget for

music lovers. The iPod mini is much smaller than its counterpart and sports a much smaller, 4 GB, hard drive which is capable of storing roughly 1000 sonas. It also features some games, a calendar, contacts, and note displaying capabilities. The sound quality is, to say the least, superb and the battery life is just as amazing. The iPod mini has both IEEE-1394 and USB 2.0 connectivity which makes it compatible with both PC and Apple Mac's.



Supplier: Apple South Africa [011] 234 0922 Internet: www.apple.com/za RRP: R2239







Acrox Mini Mobile Optical Mouse

This is a really interesting hybrid of the flash memory technology. Acrox has made the clever decision to design a very functional notebook mouse (a small mouse that is mainly used with a notebook computer) and built some flash memory into it. The

version I received for review had 32 MB built in and was fairly comfortable to work with. The mouse features an optical sensor as well as a scroll wheel. A smart leather case is also included to carry it around. This is truly a great idea and should be useful to all notebook users.



Supplier: Wentek International [021] 551 8866 Internet: www.wentek.co.za RRP: R230

Xploder V5 plus Media Center

You're at a friend's house: he puts photos, a few MP3s and an MPEG video on your USB flash disk. You go back to your house and you suddenly realize that you don't have a computer!* No fear, the new Xploder V5 will let you stick that USB flash disk into the USB port on your PS2 and listen to the MP3s, view the photos and even watch the movie right there on your PS2. Oh, it's great for cheating at games too, but Xploder has always been good for that. If you need to watch movies or look at photos on your PS2, V5 does the trick.



Supplier: Bowline [021] 550 9700 Internet: www.bowline.co.za RRP: R410

Transcend JetFlash Wireless

The JetFlash Wireless gives you the best of both worlds - it is both a 128 MB USB flash disk as well as a 802.11b wireless LAN adapter, this, even though it is not much bigger than a traditional USB flash disk. The wireless adapter can be turned off if it is going to be used only as a flash disk by means of toggling the switch on the unit. The box included a USB extension cable which is handy to move the JetFlash Wireless around when there is bad reception. The software bundled with this unit is also intuitive and



allows you to do everything a normal wireless adapter can do

Aiptek SlimCam 3200

The SlimCam 3200 is really small and should fit virtually anywhere. It features a 3.1 mega pixel resolution and a 4X digital zoom, there is no optical zoom on this camera. It also features two recording modes, still and video with the latter producing a

video clip with a resolution of 320 x 240. A great feature on this camera is the 16 MB of internal memory which includes a slot for SD cards. The built in flash is also a bonus and something which is not often seen on these types of cameras.



Supplier: Light Edge Technology [021] 510 8270 Internet: www.lightedge.co.za RRP: R699

Supplier: Wentek International [021] 551 8866 Internet: www.wentek.co.za RRP: R799



LG RH4920W

This product is on the top of my Christmas list! LG have recently released this fabulous product which basically sees a normal DVD player added with DVD writing capabilities and a built in 80 GB hard drive. The hard drive is used to record (like VHS does) television programs without the need for tape, it can record up to 80 hours of footage. This also adds time shifting capabilities

to this device which allows you to rewind and playback a television show or sports match while it is busy recording. Then when you are ready you can record the program to DVD from the hard drive.



Supplier: LG Internet: www.lge.co.za RRP: TBA

Pinnacle PCTV Deluxe

I am particularly passionate about this product as I have personally owned one for a couple of months now. Essentially the PCTV Deluxe is an external TV-tuner which allows you to view and record your television shows directly to your hard drive. It also doubles as a capture device for your video camera if you wish to import your home movies. A great feature on this product is its

time-shifting capabilities which allow you to rewind a show while it is busy recording. The kit also includes a wireless remote control which allows the PCTV Deluxe to convert your computer into a television if you



Supplier: Pinnacle Systems [0861] 788 346 Internet: www.pinnaclesys.co.za RRP: R2425





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Wacom Pen Partner

Wacom has long been known as the leader in the tablet market space. Their latest offering brings the use of a pen and tablet to the notebook or space conscious user. The Pen Partner measures

a mere 147.5 mm x 160.2 mm x 12.0 mm and has 512 levels of pressure sensitivity. The softincluded, called JustWrite, allows you to add hand written notes into any Office document. Even though it is not aimed directly at the design market, you should be able to cope with it as such a tool. The pen also features a programmable switch which is very handy to streamline various tasks.



Supplier: DDS [0860] 337 000 Internet: www.directserivces.co.za RRP: TBA



MPIO HD200

The HD200 is an MP3 player which competes in the iPod mini arena. This offering from MPIO offers 5 GB of storage space and

weighs a mere 106g. The blue-lit, 8-line, LCD display offers enough information to keep you up to speed with everything about the song you are listening to as well as the folder you are currently in. The HD200 also features a voice recorder and five-band graphic equalizer. The batteries should last you between 10 and 15 hours thanks to the built-in rechargeable Li-ion batteries. The sound quality of this MP3 player is second to none and is a pleasure to use.



Supplier: Reviva [021] 409 7952 Internet: www.reviva.co.za RRP: R2600



Creative MuVo TX FM

The Creative's MuVo range of MP3 players has made quite an impact on the MP3 player market. The MuVo TX FM is another chapter in the MuVo range of devices this time adding a built-in radio to the equation. The unit I received had 128 MB of flash memory built-in and voice recording capabilities. One of the

unique features of the MuVo range of MP3 players is the removable battery compartment which reveals the USB connector of the device that connects to your computer. The battery life is quite amazing too and it is able to operate on a single AAA battery for just under 10 hours.



Supplier: Sahara [011] 542 1000 Internet: www.sahara.co.za RRP: R899

modding gear

Modshop has for a long time been one of the great online modding shops. The main product line that Modshop distributes is Sunbeam which has been around since the beginning of the case modification revolution. First up is the Dual CCFL UV light kit which comes with two lights, really handy for UV lighting. Another new and innovative product is the round IDE cable with an EL cable integrated into it. This effectively is only a standard round IDE cable with a light that is twisted around it. There is also a UV round IDE cable which is completely covered in UV reflective plastic. Paired with the Dual CCFL UV kit this could really add a very nice effect to any case. If you want to highlight a specific feature inside your case, or just want a really bright LED to shine somewhere, the laser LED is the product you should look at. There are various colours, including UV, which can even be mounted outside your case if you choose. As mentioned before, fan grills are very popular accessories today and Modshop also sent me an array of different shapes and sizes. There are fan grills for both 80 mm and 120 mm fans. Interestingly there is a new type of fan grill called a 3D fan grill. This is basically a grill that has a design that is raised and not flat as traditional grills. These are available in both steel and UV plastic. Then there are LED fan grills, these are plastic grills that host an LED inside it that lights up when the computer is switched on. Lastly, the kit I was sent, contained a case modification accessory often overlooked, case feet. This kit allows you to remove the case feet from your old case (not all cases are compatible) and install these that feature an LED light. The effect is quite funky and if you have a colour scheme throughout your case this could be the perfect compliment.

Supplier: Modshop

Internet: www.modshop.co.za











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• Intel 915P

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- Wireless LAN
- Duo DDR Design PCI-Express
- Dual Gigabit LAN
- IEEE 1394b
- Intel High Definition (HD) Audio

GA-81915P Duo Pro



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TECHNOLOGY







BenO M310

BenQ has a lot of innovative products in its line-up and this, their latest notebook mouse, takes the cake (or cheese in this matter). The M310 is an optical, wireless, mouse, the transceiver, cleverly enough, fits snugly into the body of the mouse and is released when the button on top of the mouse is pressed. This activates the mouse and all you need to do now is plug it into an open

USB port and you have a wireless mouse roaming on your desk. The M310 operates on two AAA batteries which amazingly also fit into the body.



Supplier: BenQ Internet: www.beng.com RRP: TBA

Logitech Z680

Even though this set of speakers has been around for a while, it is still the crème de la crème of speakers. It was on my Christmas list last year but no one responded to my pleas. These speakers sport a whopping 505 Watt RMS which, let me assure you, will get the neighbours complaining when you play your favourite game at full volume. The Z680 also features a wireless remote

but one of my favourite features is the control pad which features the volume control and status-LCD. These speakers are one of the ultimate Christmas gifts which can be used for your home theatre and console as well.



Supplier: Rectron [011] 203 1000 Internet: www.rectron.co.za RRP: R2999

Logitech diNovo Media Desktop

Logitech seems to be getting the recipe for great products spot on. The diNovo Media Desktop is such a device and consists of four parts, the keyboard, Mediapad, MX900 optical mouse, and the mouse charger which doubles as a Bluetooth hub that connects it all together. This hub also allows other Bluetooth peripherals to connect to your computer such as cellular phones and

PDA's. The Mediapad also doubles as a remote for your computer and you are able to control things such as mouse movement from the comfort of your chair if you so wish. If you have the cash this will look very good next to a set of Z680's.



Supplier: Light Edge Technology [021] 510 8270 Internet: www.lightedge.co.za RRP: R2699

case modding

I received a number of very funky case modification goodies from Naked IT any of which will make great Christmas gifts. A very popular modification to add to your computer these days is to replace the power connectors from your power supply with UV reflective ones. Naked IT features a wide variety of connector sets that are UV reflective as well as the tools needed to replace these connectors such as the special crimping tool and old power connector strippers. Thumb screws also seem to be a popular modification to add to a computer and I was amazed at what is currently available - take for example the screws which feature various game logos or the ones which feature a skull and bones. Tying up your cables neatly to ensure optimal airflow should be a top priority for any case modder. In the kit that Naked IT supplied was a cable sleeve kit which allows you to do just that. This product includes an expandable plastic meshed-sleeve which you use to cover your cables and then to finish it off you use the supplied heat shrink to complete the job. Fan grills are always something I have a soft spot for. Naked IT have an array of various shapes such as the HL, UT, and Counter-Strike logos as well as the biohazard logo, a spider web with spider, and a fan grill that is shaped in the silhouette of a naked woman. Another useful case modification product is case badges, and there is a huge array of various designs. The first set of case badges is glow-in-the-dark and the designs include the biohazard sign, various game logos and my favourite, a badge which says Warning Over-clocked. There is also a set of aluminium case badges which features an etched logo. These look particularly smart and also feature much the same designs as the glow-in-the-dark case badges.

Supplier: Naked IT [011] 482 5493 Internet: www.nakedit.co.za





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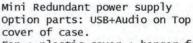








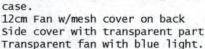
Fan



P/S2 ATX with Dual Fan or Triple















































Logitech MX 1000

Just when we thought the optical mice is the peripheral of the future Logitech goes and puts a laser in a mouse. The MX 1000 is the first laser mouse which adds about 20 times the accuracy to the tracking of a mouse. The MX 1000 mouse can work on

uneven and very shiny surfaces, such as a polished table. The mouse itself looks awesome, it features a built in battery meter and tilt-wheel scrolling. The ergonomics is also awesome and it is one of the most comfortable mice I have used in a long time. This is going to the ultimate gift for the serious gamer.



Supplier: Logitech Internet: www.logitech.com RRP: R800

Iomega 60 GB Portable HDD

Having a portable hard drive is handy, especially if you have a large one. Iomega's portable 60 GB hard drive is smaller than

traditional external hard drives as it makes use of a notebook hard drive. The casina is smart and features some anti shock qualities. A very nice feature of this hard drive is the fact that it does not need a large power source, instead a cable is supplied which allows you to tap power from a PS/2 port. This device also ships with Norton Ghost and Iomega's Automatic Backup, both great tools for backing up your data.



Supplier: Storgate [011] 695 1600 Internet: www.iomega.com RRP: R1834

Garmin iQue 3200

Garmin is one of the world leaders in GPS (Global positioning System) tracking. The iQue 3200 takes this a step further and combines a PDA with a GPS tracking system. This product works surprisingly well and the benefit of having an all in one device speaks for itself. This product's PDA part is based on the Palm PDA devices and it makes use of PalmOS. Some other features include voice navigation and software that support things like finding a particular restaurant. The only extra you would need to buy is the South African maps to load onto this device if used locally.



Supplier: GP Tech [012] 667 6960 Internet: www.avnic.co.za/ RRP: R6395

Pinnacle ShowCenter

Pinnacle's latest product in the multimedia market segment is the ShowCenter. This device connects to your television and to your computer via a home network (wired or wireless) and lets vou perform various tasks such as watch movies, view pictures or listen to your music which is stored on your computer. The ShowCenter has a very easy to navigate menu system which allows you to, for example, find songs and create play lists. Connecting the ShowCenter to a TV-Tuner will allow you to

record your television programs directly to your hard drive. The ShowCenter is a great device if you want to expand the multimedia capabilities of your computer.



Supplier: Pinnacle Systems [0861] 788 346 Internet: www.pinnaclesys.co.za RRP: R3099

Freecom USB Card

Freecom has been quiet in recent times, which is sad, as they are also known for their innovative products. The USB Card is a funky redesign of the standard USB flash disk - it is shaped and sized to almost exactly the same measurements as a credit card. The unit I received for review was the 128 MB version and it fit-

ted surprisingly snug into my wallet. This card connects to your computer via the USB cable which is hidden inside this device, when needed the connector is simply pressed out and the short cable allows it to easily fit almost anywhere a USB port is placed.



Supplier: Square One [011] 321 5900 Internet: www.freecom.com RRP: R899



Kasaku A900CEV

The A900CEV is a 5.1 channel speaker set which can be used for both your computer and home theatre needs. It sports a huge

10-inch subwoofer which is housed in a box standing nearly 47 CM tall. Each channel's volume can be individually adjusted with the wireless remote control and on the subwoofer's colourful control pad. A very nice addition to this kit is the two rear-speaker stands that are included which will



make its use in home theatre setups much more attractive. The A900CEV has four sets of stereo inputs which can be individually selected when needed.

Supplier: Wentek International [021] 551 8866 Internet: www.wentek.co.za RRP: R1999

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Asus has become a major contender in the wireless arena and this product proves their worth. The WL-167G is a USB 2.0 wireless network adapter based on the 802.11g wireless specification. It features the usual encryption technologies such as WEP

and WPA and a feature I particularly liked was the profiling capabilities in the software which allows you to have profiles for, say, your office wireless network as well as your home wireless network. The box also contains an innovative USB 2.0 connector which allows the WL-167G to be swivelled in the direction of its best signal reception.



Supplier: ASUS [011] 783 5450 Internet: www.asus.com RRP: TBA

Thermaltake Gamma Pad

Testing the waters in each corner of the market, Thermaltake's Gamma Pad is an interesting attempt at finding a niche in the

'kitsch' area of computing. As a mouse pad, the PVC surface and acrylic base suffice yet the smallish size (288mm x 228 mm) leaves you feeling a little cramped. USB powered, the pad's translucent lower 'bubble' surface can be one of 7 colours or it can cycle through the colours. It's a cute idea and works reasonably well, if you have another USB port to spare.



Supplier: Corex [011] 707 5000 Internet: www.corex.co.za RRP: R320

Asus WL-HDD 2.5

This is another gadget I am putting on my list. The WL-HDD 2.5 is a smart looking external 2.5-inch hard drive chassis with a difference. Once you have installed a hard drive of your choice, this device will act as both a NAS (Network Attached Storage) device on both wired and wireless networks, and a wireless 802.11g AP.

Another super feature is the Auto-Copy feature which allows you to insert any USB flash disk into the USB slot and the WL-HDD 2.5 will copy the contents automatically, without pressing any buttons. It uses an intuitive web based interface to configure and it's easy to do.



Supplier: ASUS [011] 783 5450 Internet: www.asus.com RRP: TBA

e-puppy

The e-puppy is a really cute little doggie-teddy that plugs into the USB port of your computer and sits on your desk. Inside this

puppy are a bunch of sensors which will execute a task when interacted with. The left arm of the puppy can be pressed to let it read the current emails while the right arm can be pressed to switch the unit off while the left paw will activate a silent period and the right paw can be pressed to open a website. The e-puppy also includes a microphone and an LED which will alert you of incoming e-mail.



Supplier: Wentek International [021] 551 8866 Internet: www.wentek.co.za RRP: R280

Aiptek PocketDV 3300

This is a very entry-level still and DV camera and features a flip out colour LCD screen to view what you are currently recording.

The digital camera function sports a three mega pixel sensor while the digital video recorder is capable of recording video clips at a maximum resolution of 640x480 pixels. The maximum recording time of a video clip is just under five minutes and the only limit to how many clips you can take is the capacity of your storage media. It features a built-in flash memory capacity of 16 MB but an SD slot is available to increase the storage capacity.



Gigabyte Wireless Optical Mouse

A good mouse is always essential, and with laptops and notebooks being supplied with those horrible touch pads, a good portable mouse is a great investment. The Gigabyte optical GW-W9C device is not only handy and effective, but is also really slick to look at. It has a unique feature called Dual Mode which allows you to use the rechargeable batteries or connect the supplied DC Jack cable into the mouse and then into the USB receiv-

er which slots easily into a USB PC port. This action will also facilitate the battery re-charging process. Small, compact and perfect to carry around when you're on the movel



Supplier: Rectron [011] 203 1000 Internet: www.rectron.co.za RRP: R250

12 SUPERSTAR GAMES III "...new favourite game of all time." PSW





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Xpanel Multifunction Control Thermalright SP97 Athlon Panel

There seems to be a move towards more compact devices for the PC. Take this one, for example; it provides the user with front side USB and 1394 ports, as well as headphone and speaker ports, a three fan control setup with a blue LCD screen for monitoring system health and an internal HDD cooler. The Xpanel Multifunction Control Panel is a sturdy silver device. stylishly finished and designed to fit in a 5 1/4 " drive bay. A single, large knob controls every available function (ok, fan speed basically) and the blue LCD is large, bright and guite attractive. With so many similar devices on the market, it all comes down to looks and, of course pricing...



Multifunctional Nothing really new	
Naked IT [011] 482 5493 www.nakedit.co.za	RRP: R495.00 Reviewer: Walt Pretorius

Motorola E398

It's not enough these days for them to be communications devices. Requirements upon cell phones demand multi-faceted multi-talented superstars who can sing, paint and dance yet still make a mean ham and cheese sandwich.



Motorola has thus far managed reasonable cell phones, some better than others. Giving the term 'All singing' new life, the E398 contains dual 22KHz stereo speakers for loud (and high quality) external sound. Even the phone's vibration feature is used as a bass boost. Gimmicky 'rhythm lights' can flash in multiple colours yet remain pointless except for showing off. Somewhere someone missed the boat however. The MP3 player application takes forever to load and once loaded, you can't do anything else with the phone except listen to music. The integrated flashlight (not flash, flashlight) does make taking low-resolution pictures in the dark easier though.

Comes with 64MB SD memory card Sturd MP3 player substandard	y design	
Motorola SA [0860] 10 10 39 www.motorola.co.za		R2700.00 Ed Dracon

CPU cooler

Thermalright has become much loved by both hardcore over clocking enthusiasts, and those seeking the most unobtrusive cooling solution short of water, since the release of its SLK800 heat-sink some 18 months ago. Since then, the company has won acclaim for its updated SP94 P4 cooling solution, and now in a characteristically nondescript little cardboard box I find myself faced with the latest SP97 model - essentially an SP94 for Athlon systems.

It may look relatively discrete but the SP97 is not a lightweight by any means. Those 32 copper fins and 3 individual heatpipes make for an almost 600g cooling solution, excluding the required fan. There's not much height, so the torque placed on the base and board aren't too much of a concern, but it's nonetheless good to see the high-quality base-plate which fits beneath the CPU socket for added support.

Fitting the SP97 is simple thanks to clever design. Attaching a fan of your choice, as this cooler is designed to accommodate 80 - 92 mm fans without fuss, is similarly hassle free with minimum vibration thanks to the supplied fan-clips. Once in place, the SP97 demonstrates just why the company's products are sought after despite a premium price. With a 92 mm CoolerMaster fan in place, the Athlon 1800+ system I tested it on never exceeded 40 degrees C, whereas a competitor product did well to keep the temp to 43 while idle.

By allowing the attachment of larger fans, which are able to move more air with fewer revolutions (and therefore less noise), Thermalright have placed the decision of just how much noise you want your machine to generate squarely in your court. With the 92 mm CoolMaster I used, noise levels were undoubtedly below normal while the cooler did its job.

The Thermalright SP97 extends the powers of the SP94 to AMD systems, and hardcore AMD users should be glad it does. This is one of the best aftermarket CPU coolers currently available.



Great abilities Comparatively discrete Almost too discrete for an aftermarket coole	r	
Frontosa IT [011] 468 4724 www.frontosa.co.za		TBA Russell Bennett

Rockfire Windstorm Pro

Ever since Microsoft called an end to its famous line of Sidewinder gaming input products, there has been a gap in the market for a new leader to take the challenge to other established players like Logitech. The product on test here could represent just such a candidate.

Rockfire's Windstorm Pro joystick certainly looks the part. It's sturdy, chunky and of a solid enough construction to make you feel good about wrenching it around. The large base set of this particular unit also houses the vibration motor, which simulates a certain level of force feedback into the yoke for added realism.

This controller has an eight-way POV hat, one trigger, three thumbtriggers and an additional two buttons situated on either side of the rotary throttle, directly below the yoke. This may not seem like very many buttons compared to some rivals, but then how many more do you really need for your average flight simulator, the remainder of the controls will have to remain the preserve of your keyboard.

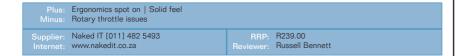
Eraonomically, the Rockfire scores some big points the moment you grasp it. It is a comfortable feeling product, with an extra large hand-rest and that expansive base set firmly anchoring it. Perhaps it was made for my large hands, but the Windstorm Pro feels spot on to me. While I struggle to race without a force-feedback steering wheel any more, I've never been convinced by the technology in joysticks. The Rockfire goes some way to changing my view however, as its vibration effect is nicely implemented and adds a welcome element of realism as yet another round of machine gun fire hammers into the

wooden structure of your Hurricane Mk IV as you skim low over European farmland... Turn the effect to maximum strength however and the clattering of the plastic thumbtriggers shaking in their housings can put you off.

Other problems also became apparent. First, the rotary throttle never settled down even after numerous recalibrations. I could get 100% throttle, 55%, or 0%, but nothing in between. The accuracy of the input itself was good however, with this joystick featuring rather long travel to the corners which translated into extra sensitivity for those careful piloting moments.

So perhaps not quite the Sidewinder replacement I'd hoped for, but nonetheless a good choice if you're looking for a force-feedback flight yoke which feels great to hold and looks good too. You'd have to make sure yours didn't demonstrate the same throttle problems however, there's no way to overlook such an issue.









Asus P5GD2 Premium Wireless Edition

I recently tested an Asus board called the P5AD2 Premium. Don't get confused, the P5GD2 Premium Wireless Edition on test here is not the same product. These two motherboards share likenesses aside from their similar names as they form the basis of Asus product offerings in the new Intel 900 series of platform solutions. The P5GD2 on test here is the more mainstream-oriented of the pair, being based on the Intel 915P chipset as opposed to the 925 of its enthusiast-targeted sibling. Apart from this difference, the mainstream offering matches the acclaimed feature-set which I was so enthusiastic about blow for blow. There are dual Gigabit LAN controllers, 803.11g WLAN and triple RAID controllers built into the board. These controllers allow the connection of eight SATA drives, 2 IDE drives on a vanilla IDE channel and 4 more on the IDE RAID interface. A preposterous total capacity for storage then, if calculated using the 200 GB drives common today...

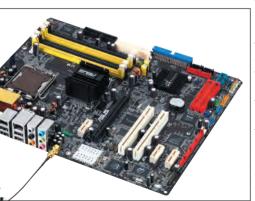
The graphics subsystem is of course of the PCI-Express x16 variety, an interface which has delivered less than it's on-paper capabilities suggest, but is still in its early days of adoption. From the discussion I had with a true 3D guru from ATi this month, the speedy bi-directional architecture holds truly exciting potential in the near future of gaming. Audio is taken care of by the Intel ICHR6 controller, and therefore takes the form of the Azalea hi-fidelity audio solution as found in its more expensive counterpart. The codec in this particular case is a C-Media one, but nonetheless features are identical. Eight channel output with eight jack-sensing audio connectors.

While one of the main differences between the 915 and 925 chipsets is the ability to use older DDR RAM modules on the 915, Asus clearly believe that anyone wanting an LGA775 system also wants no compromises on RAM performance, as the P5GD2 only supports the newer DDR2 DIMM standard. As for connectivity, apart from standard USB 2.0 ports these latest boards also feature IEEE 1394b connections, also known as Firewire 800. This standard offers twice the throughput of older Firewire versions while maintaining backward-compatibility with these devices. Performance using a 3.0 GHz P4 chip is once again, almost identical, with this "lesser" board delivering SiSoft Sandra 2004 results of 7340 ALU and 5569 SSE MFLOPS. What's more, it's so easy to over-clock these Asus offerings that extracting even more grunt from your latest investment is easy

and comparatively safe, with all frequency and clock adjust-

ments available within the excellent BIOS. Which makes the

P5GD2 an even more impressive proposition than the P5AD2 I



tested last month. The 915 chipset might use a lesser memory controller than the one integrated into the 925 variant, but it barely shows in performance testing. This board includes absolutely all the features of the highly impressive P5AD2, at an even more affordable price point. Can't argue with that...

	: Once again, incredible list of integrated features : Doesn't have the geek street-cred of enthusiast targeted 925		
	ASUS [011] 783 5450 www.asus.com	RRP: TBA Reviewer: Russell Bennett	

Rockfire XForce

It's got everything one could want from a game pad, except a certain level of quality. Everything works well, the two-motor vibration is powerful and



both D-pad and analogue sticks are functional. The physical shape of the controller leaves a little to be desired, slightly more bulky than one would want. Once again Rockfire's driver works against itself, the 'auto-calibration' function presenting more problems than anything else.

Instead of being another button, clicking down the right analogue stick switches the game pad's mode between game pad, joystick and wheel although the differences in these modes are inconsequential. For the most part and considering the price, the XForce is a decent game pad but overshadowed by slightly higher quality game pads out there.

Cheap Driver dodgy Bulky design	
Naked IT [011] 482 5493 www.nakedit.co.za	RRP: R399.00 Reviewer: Ed Dracon

SuperFlower Power Supply

The Power Supply unit of a computer is usually the most underrated piece of equipment in any computer. SuperFlower recently released a power supply aimed at the computer enthusiast and case modding junkie. The first thing you will notice about this power supply is its large 120mm fan situated at the bottom part of it. When switched on there is a blue LED which lights

the fan blades and looks really funky. The back end of the unit sees a honey-comb grill which increases the airflow through the circuitry of the power supply. There is also a small button at the back which allows you to set the fan speed if you so choose. These power supply units are available in 400W and 450W versions both of which should be great for gamers and computer enthusiasts.



Awesome cooling What if blue is not your colour?	
BlueChip [021] 421 8986 www.super-flower.com.tw	R500 (450) R550 (500) Tom Taylor

Hi Cool 3D Slot Fan

This is a fun and versatile system designed to provide extra cooling to your graphics card. Three fans (which light up, by the way) are provided with a steel bracket system that fits into a PCI slot area. The bracket system allows for multiple fan configurations. It's a great idea, but how well it works depends on the knowhow and logic of the user. The device could disrupt airflow patterns if incorrectly configured. A little experimentation should do the trick to take advantage of this device.



Plus: Extra cooling never hurts Versatile Bright lights, bright lights! Minus: Will need a little experimenting for optimal performance			
Supplier: Naked IT [011] 482 5493 RRP: R159.00 Internet: www.nakedit.co.za Reviewer: Walt Pretorius			

Silverstone Eudemon

Keeping control of your case's temperature is all the rage - you can (theoretically) find a balance between temperature and noise. Besides which, it's good to know what's happening inside your case in terms of temperature.

This device is a simple and effective

way to do that. With three temperature monitors and fan controls reporting to a LCD driven unit, the Eudemon is simple to use and takes care of the task very well. However, quick control access is a difficult matter with only two control buttons, and other units effect more fans.



Effective Only three fan controls Naked IT [011] 482 5493 R399.00 Walt Pretorius



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HIS Excalibur X800XTPE VIVO 256MB IceQII AGP

This has got to be one of the best graphics cards I have reviewed in a long time. Generally the high-end graphics cards from various manufacturers are on par as they all make use of the reference design of either NVIDIA or ATI but this time HIS managed to squeeze a lot of extra juice out of the ATI X800XT PE. This GPU (Graphics Processing Unit) is the current top offering from ATI, so the performance is already superb without any tweaking. The first noticeable difference about the HIS offering is the large (2 slot) heat sink and fan. Many people do not like this oversized cooling, including myself, but in this case it makes a huge difference in both the temperature and performance of this card. This cooling method has been dubbed IceQII by HIS and works by blowing the warm air out of the back of the case while sucking the cooler air in over the RAM and GPU. HIS claims this offers a decrease in temperature of 11 degrees, though I cannot prove this to a certainty the card did run a lot cooler than my personal ATI X800XT PE thus I was able to push it a little further when over-clocking it. Speaking of which, there was no real need to do so as the performance it offered as is was very impressive. I ran Aauamark 3 and achieved a result of 72970 and the brand new 3DMark05 produced a result of 6793, this as apposed to that of my own card which achieves 71781 and 5988 in these benchmarks respectively. Both these benchmarks were executed on a standard Pentium 4 computer which was not over-clocked. The performance difference between my X800XT PE and the offering from HIS is quite interesting to note and I was impressed (and gutted, as my own card did not perform as well) to say the least.

Looking at this card's other features it sports VIVO (Video-In, Video-Out) capability which will allow you to plug a video signal into this card and output it again to another source such as a television. Counter-Strike fans will enjoy the bundle which includes a full version of Counter Strike: Condition Zero. The other titles include a video editing suite from ULEAD called VideStudio as well as PowerDVD. The only other game that found its way into the bundle is Arx Fatalis. HIS has definitely raised the bar for its competitors and I look forward to seeing the response from other manufacturers.



	Great performance Large heat-sink and fan	
	CyberSmart [021] 461-0014 www.cybersmart.co.za	R5950.00 Tom Taylor

Asus Extreme EN5900 PCI-Express



PCI-Express has taken the market by storm. But is the bus really delivering the performance its on-paper bandwidth implies? The PCI-e offering on test here is probably not the best example with which to explore the limits of the bus. This Asus EN5900 Extreme is in fact a mainstream offering, priced to provide an entry point into the PCI-e experience without breaking the bank.

This card features 128 MB of DDR RAM running at an effective 700 MHz, and is based on the NVidia PCI-Express chipset which makes use of a High Speed Interconnect (HSI) bridge to essentially turn an ordinary AGP GPU into a PCI-e solution. Using the latest official NVidia drivers, Forceware 61.77, this offering failed to impress initially. The latest 3DMark 05 benchmark suite only awarded the N5900 857 points, less than half what my 128 MB 9800 Pro gets on the same bench. It's indicative of the less powerful GPU and shader units incorporated into this more budget-oriented card, as this latest suite is packed with pixel shading tests. A 2-generation old NVidia offering, the original FX 5800, scores an almost identical 847 marks.

However use older, less demanding test platforms and this Asus 5900 goes some way towards redeeming itself. A 3DMark03 score of 5549 with no FSAA, and even better 3686 with 4X FSAA, suggests some pretty adequate performance especially with the cut-back price in mind. What's more, games developers are starting to look at taking advantage of the bi-directional capabilities of the bus more and more, unlocking some really exciting possibilities for the next generation of titles. Some of the ideas for taking advantage of this bandwidth are absolutely revolutionary and are sure to start having an effect on general gaming practices in the near future.

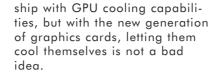
So the Asus EN5900 is hardly deserving of the moniker extreme, but on the other hand it does pack plenty of pure performance particularly in context to the currently-played titles available. For the next-generation of GPU-heavy titles then, this board appears to be a poor choice. But for the current crop of games and us addicts who play them? In this case the Asus EN5900 Extreme offers a solid entry into PCI-e. The output may not be spectacular in all cases, but it does make the game playable.

	Plus: Good bang for the buck Just about the cheapest PCI-e starter card Minus: Struggles with newer gaming technology, as evidenced by poor 3DMark05 resu		
Supplier: ASUS [011] 783 5450 Internet: www.asus.com		RRP: TBA Reviewer: Russell Bennett	

Aquacool external liquid cooling system

With so many new players in the water-cooling market, it's getting tough to make the right choices. This system features a large external unit which, while minimizing PC mobility, does a great job at keeping the CPU cool. A

digital control knob allows the user to take full control of the system, while the large blue LCD screen provides information about the system health. The system does not





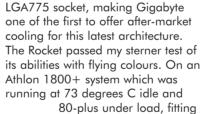
Plus: Excellent cooling Minus: Decreases mobility No GPU cooler	
Supplier: Naked IT [011] 482 5493	RRP: R999.00
Internet: www.nakedit.co.za	Reviewer: Walt Pretorius

Gigabyte 3D Rocket CPU cooler

At first, I thought the Gigabyte 3D Rocket CPU cooler was just a flashier, updated version of the 3D Cooler Pro, which I tested some time ago and subsequently bought for my own machine.

However closer inspection revealed

a couple of important modifications compared to the older model. While sticking to a similar (albeit subtly rocket-shaped) design methodology, the Rocket now also utilises heat-pipes for additional cooling ability. This cooler has been redesigned to fit onto the new Intel

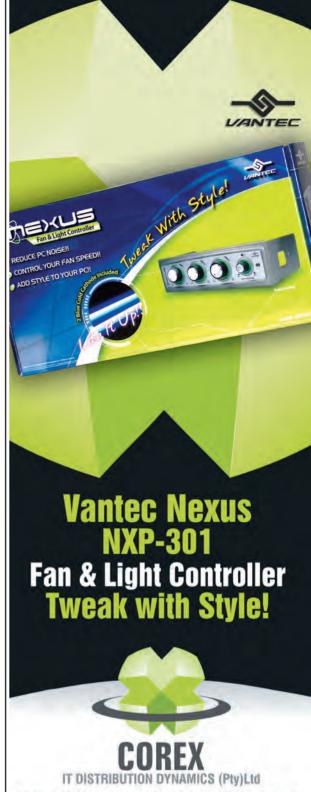


this Gigabyte solution dropped these figures to 42 and 46 respectively, a decent if not top-shelf performance.

And while not eerily silent, the Rocket manages this without generating much noise. Which altogether makes the Gigabyte 3D Rocket a solid and capable aftermarket cooling solution, with its reach now extended to include support for the latest Intel socket solutions.







The Nexus NXP-301 Fan & Light Controller combines the functionality of fan control and cold cathode light activation into one single unit. It offers 3 separate channels, which can be adjusted to allow full control of the fan ranging from FULL SPEED to COMPLETELY OFF. This will cut down or eliminate unnecessary noise level by reducing the fan speed. The light activation function support 2 cold cathode lights. By adjusting to either ON, OFF, or SOUND ACTIVATED, it allows you to have full control of how you want to light up your case. Housed in a stylish aluminum casing designed to fit in any standard 5.25" drive bay with ultra-bright LED, the Nexus NXP-301 fan & light controller is the mod you have been waiting for!



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hardware I reviews



Mecer Sigma 8 Premium Extreme

Mustek's Mecer Premium Extreme range of systems is designed with just one aim - to provide customers with the most cutting-edge, high-performance technology currently available, pure and simple. On almost all accounts, this particular product delivers on that bold statement.

Built around the latest LGA775 version of Intel's most expensive chip, this 3.4 GHz P4 Extreme Edition CPU powers the heart of this Mustek monster. RAM is provided by two, 512 MB 533 MHz DDR2 DIMMs in keeping with the range-topping positioning. And storage is catered for in the form of two 250 GB SATA hard disks, in a RAID 0 set turning the two separate disks into a single, enormous, high-speed volume according to the OS. There's no redundancy using this RAID level, but by using two drives mechanics for a single logical disk volume, performance is effectively doubled. The Gigabyte

8ANXP-D board used in this machine is an enthusiast-targeted offering and features 8 SATA connectors. There are four from the Intel 925 chipset itself, and four from an integrated Silicone Image RAID controller. Graphics duties were taken care of by a 128 MB NVidia PCX 5900, utilising the 16X PCI-Express interface. Utilising Intel Matrix RAID capabilities, the 500 GB RAID set built from the two Maxtor drives delivered crushing data throughput at around 60 MB/s, while the DDR2 chips even still clocked at the vanilla 533 MHz are undoubtedly the highest performing memory solution currently available with bandwidth in the region of 5000 MB/s. Meanwhile the two integrated Gigabit NICs, a PCIe and conventional PCI integrated component, deliver tremendous networking performance. That CPU, with its 2 MB L3 cache architecture, also sits proudly amongst the highest ranking of its competitors in terms of sheer performance. The Extreme Edition is still hamstrung by its extreme price sticker,

however. If you really need the best gaming platform available and money is no object, the P4EE is probably it. If cost is a concern, as it is in most real world cases, the Athlon 64 holds all the trumps as it's capable of delivering similar performance at a much more attractive price. This Mecer Sigma 8 Premium Extreme is an exceptionally powerful machine albeit hindered by a middle of the range graphics solution. If you are willing to spend the substantial premium for the P4EE CPU, you may well want to spend a bit extra for a decent graphics board. I'd certainly recommend it if gaming is likely to be the systems desired purpose.



Philips 109B5 CRT with LightFrame

There are some pieces of kit that come along and really make you want to buy them. This Philips 109B5 monitor with LightFrame enhancements is just such a product...

A bigger screen is one of those things that you notice the most once you go back to the previous size. But with this product, it wasn't just the ease of reading the larger display that will make me miss it. The quality of this 19-inch true-flat CRT tube is really above average, and the engineering behind LightFrame is not only innovative, it

In a bid to combine the high-definition output of a PC monitor and the brighter image used in televisions, Philips integrated a small ASIC into its latest offering and distributed some control software which interfaces with this component. In short, this combination allows the user to specify a portion of the screen to receive the "lightframe"

effect, which visibly improves the display of any photo or video being shown in that area. The technique makes text look, well, a little like it does on a TV screen, but the PC monitor aspect is more than taken care of with high-resolution capabilities, excellent geometry adjustment and high clarity display. The flexibility of LightFrame makes it easy to adjust to your immediate requirements.

And this innovation at the cost of a CRT screen, which seems to come down each day. This Philips offering, and its smaller 17-in sibling that also features



LightFrame, is the first display device I've seen in some time with a unique selling point which has made me yearn to buy a new screen.

Best of both worlds | Innovative LightFrame tech makes noticeable difference Has made me want to spend more money on hardware. Philips R1800.00 www.philips.co.za







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Nokia 7600

Leaves don't make good cell phones. The whole shape is wrong, not to mention the lack of necessary electronic bits. Nokia weren't paying attention, resulting in a cell phone that looks like a leaf



and functions as well as a cheetah knee-deep in quicksand. The simple task of writing an SMS has become something entirely too complex, the difficulty compounded by the laughably poor positions of the number keys. As per the norm these days, the VGA camera is poor resolution and entirely useless. The MP3 player however is functional, allowing you to listen to music while using the phone for other tasks. The design of the phone is trendy, hip and stunning as a fashion accessory yet utterly deplorable as a cell phone. Cheaper things exist that you can wear to look good and much better cell phones.

Looks stylish Everything	
Nokia [0822] 30 40 70 www.nokia.co.za	RRP: TBA Reviewer: Ed Dracon

Silverstone TJ-03

Server towers tend to skip past a lot of the eye candy you see on boxes these days, leaning more towards a minimalist feel and more function. Even the higher end Thermaltake cases don't bother with too much flash, sticking to a large side window, some extra knobs and buttons and the obligatory stack of fans. Silverstone's TJ-03 takes that concept even further. Made out of aluminium with steel



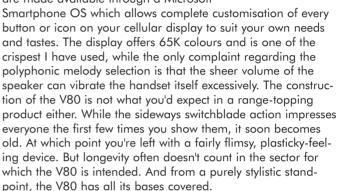
doors, it sports a large side window, four fans, a front bay for sound, 4 USB ports and one Firewire, plus ample racks for small and large drives. The sleek silver design echoes the nononsense feel of everything in it and while the lack of mounting clips and a carrying handle might be frowned upon, this case doesn't want or need it. It's a straight-forward chassis for someone who either wants to start at a vanilla level and mod the case or leave it as it is. It's not cheap, considering no PSU comes with the TJ-03, but as far as cases go it's an excellent choice.

	Large interior Sleek design Light weight Plain design Weak door magnets	
	Naked IT [011] 482 5493 www.nakedit.co.za	R1099.00 James Francis

Motorola V80

The Motorola V80 is one of those cellular handsets

that have been bred for the highly style conscious customer. If you want a phone that has character and will set those peer's tongues wagaing, the V80 is precisely what you need. It's packed with all the typical must-have cellphone features of today including Bluetooth, polyphonic ringtones, a large colour screen and integrated camera. All of these functions are made available through a Microsoft



Great looking Switchblade opening mechanism cool as ice Doesn't feel like the most durable phone available	
Motorola SA [0860] 10 10 39 www.motorola.co.za	RRP: R3600.00 Reviewer: Russell Bennett

Rockfire RacingStar Vibra

A good wheel is invaluable to racing game fans. This wheel does not really fall into that category. While it doesn't look too bad, the VibraStar has a number of faults that impede its performance. It feels a bit too flimsy - almost like a hard turn might break the unit. Combined with a rather poor desk clamp system, the player may be too nervous to really get serious with this wheel.



The biggest issue is the wheel's so-called self calibrating software. While it works fine with most racing game titles, some just don't like it. Calibration should always be accessible to the user - there are times when user friendliness goes just a bit too

As a "casual" wheel, there is nothing wrong with the VibraStar. But those who take their racing games seriously will probably want to look to another input device.

Well priced Dodgy drivers Feels weak		
Naked IT [011] 482 5493 www.nakedit.co.za	RRP: R29 Reviewer: Wa	

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anime.

news

bits and pieces



hile no groundbreaking stories have hit anime news stands this month, there are still several small pieces of information worth mentioning. Yet another Hollywood adaptation of a famous anime is in the works, this time Osamu Tesuka's Astro Boy. The film is set to be a combination of computer generated imagery and live action, directed by Genndy Tartakovsky, the creator of the western cartoon shows Samurai Jack and Dexter's Laboratory. It will deal with Astro Boy's origins and is said to be heavily inspired by the original manga.

2004 is certainly the year for fans of Final Fantasy 7 - first a movie sequel, then a game sequel to the movie, and then an online prequel. Square Enix has recently announced The Dirge of Cerberus: Final Fantasy VII for the PlayStation 2. The game will be set another year after the conclusion of Advent Children, the film, (therefore, three years after the original FFVII) and will feature one of the original characters, Vincent Valentine. Before Crisis: Final Fantasy VII, will be released for mobile phones, and will detail events leading up to the main story.

Finally, the Japanese box office results for the last weekend of September, surprisingly enough, showed no anime in the top ten. There were two live-action films based on anime or manaa, Ninia Hattori Kun The Movie and Kamen Rider Blade: Missing Ace, but no actual animated features. Topping the box office list was the Hollywood blockbuster I, Robot starring Will Smith.

review

wolf's rain

It's nothing new these days for an anime to be set in an alternate, fantasy world, and so the artistic skill lies primarily in the creation of that world - its depth, consistency and attractiveness. The world of Wolf's Rain draws from the mythological theme of sentient animals that can take human form (in this case, wolves), and places them under circumstances of poverty and hunger, in a world ruled by cruel aristocrats. Wolves are believed to have died out long ago, and so the pack is forced to either pretend to be dogs, or remain in human form. The wolves believe that another reality a paradise - awaits them, and a small group embark on a guest to discover it. Kiba, young but determined, and Tsume, experienced and cynical, form the core of the group, both assuming dominant roles which obviously bring their ideologies into conflict. Just as in live action films,

computer games, music and literature, you can spot quality a mile away. Anime is no different, and Wolf's Rain immediately comes across as a quality work. It is evident from the very first episode that the standard of drawing and animation is well above average, as is the soundtrack, immediately recognisable as the genius of legendary songstress Yoko Kanno. The characters are introduced with fervour and striking impact, and the plot (intriguing to say the least) gets underway clearly and with astonishing pace. Many top animes have been criticised as taking too long to get off the mark, but critics of that sort have nothing to worry about in this case. Wolf's Rain is a beautiful and gripping piece of visual entertainment right from the get go.

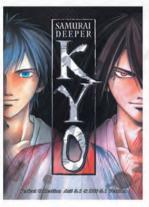




Age Restriction: All Ages











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music & dvds.

Yet another college rock band springs up in an already overfull market...

While musically sound, the band fails to produce anything that stands out on this album. A few ok songs don't do enough to make this CD anything but forgettable.



So Long, Astori The Ataris

Van Helsing Ster Kinekor It may seem like rubbish, but Van Helsing never pretends to be anything but good, clean, violent entertainment. He's a guy that kills monsters. It's got lots of CG. And then there's Kate Beckinsale. This is good fun, certainly worth watching.





The problem with remakes is that they so seldom live up to the original. This is yet another example of that sad phenomenon. Take a trip to backwoods Texas where a group of hapless individuals has to face up to a chainsaw wielding psychopath. Watch it if you like, but be aware that this movie is ultimately lack lustre and perhaps not worth the time.

Fexas Chainsaw Massc Ster Kinekor

ter Kinekor

Shrek 2 continues the fantastical and off-kilter tale of an Ogre now married to Princess Fiona and forced to visit his father-in-law in the kingdom of Far, Far Away. With non-stop laughs and even a few tender moments, Shrek 2's comedy is punctuated by musical montages that even the sinister Fairy Godmother participates in. New characters such as Puss in Boots help balance the older sidekicks such as Donkey. It's good family fun with a touch of adult humour.



books.

Computer security is one of the single most important issues in the IT industry today. Whether it is from hackers, crackers or viruses, Trojans, and worms, users are faced with a barrage of threats on a daily basis.

Of course, while users have a responsibility to ensure they have at least a basic understanding of security issues, the onus lies on the network administrator to ensure the integrity of the systems of a company. The Anti-Hacker Toolkit goes a long way to provide the embattled admin with the knowledge and tools necessary to combat malicious users.

While this is clearly not a book anyone can just pick up and read for fun, it goes a long way to show the casual observer just how much an admin has to deal with on the security side

of things. Now in its second edition, The Toolkit provides comprehensive details on security tools, explains its functions, and demonstrates how to configure it.

Weighing in at a hefty 800 odd pages The Toolkit consists of four parts, each broken down into several chapters. The tools discussed include port scanners, Web vulnerability scanners, backdoors, sniffers and forensic solutions.

If your eyes started glazing over the moment you saw the headline, then this is not the book for you. If you are a network administrator or a computer forensic specialist with security constantly at the forefront of your thoughts, then this book should be seen as your bible that you should keep close to your heart.



Before becoming a full-time writer, Ken MacLeod did a stint as a computer analyst and programmer in Edinburgh. With three of his novels being nominated for the prestigious Arthur C. Clarke award, he has become one of the heavyweights in the science-fiction arena.

His previous novels, the quadrilogy The Fall Revolution and the trilogy Engines of Light, were epics in their own right and had a grand style about them. Now, with his latest novel Newton's Wake, MacLeod tries his hand at a much more focused style of writing - the stand-alone narrative. He describes the book as a space opera that charts the struggle for human survival in a universe dominated by post-human intelligence.

Unfortunately, like many real-life operas, Newton's Wake does take some reading before the story becomes intriguing. MacLeod could be forgiven for this as it is clear that he is adapting to a different

style of writing.

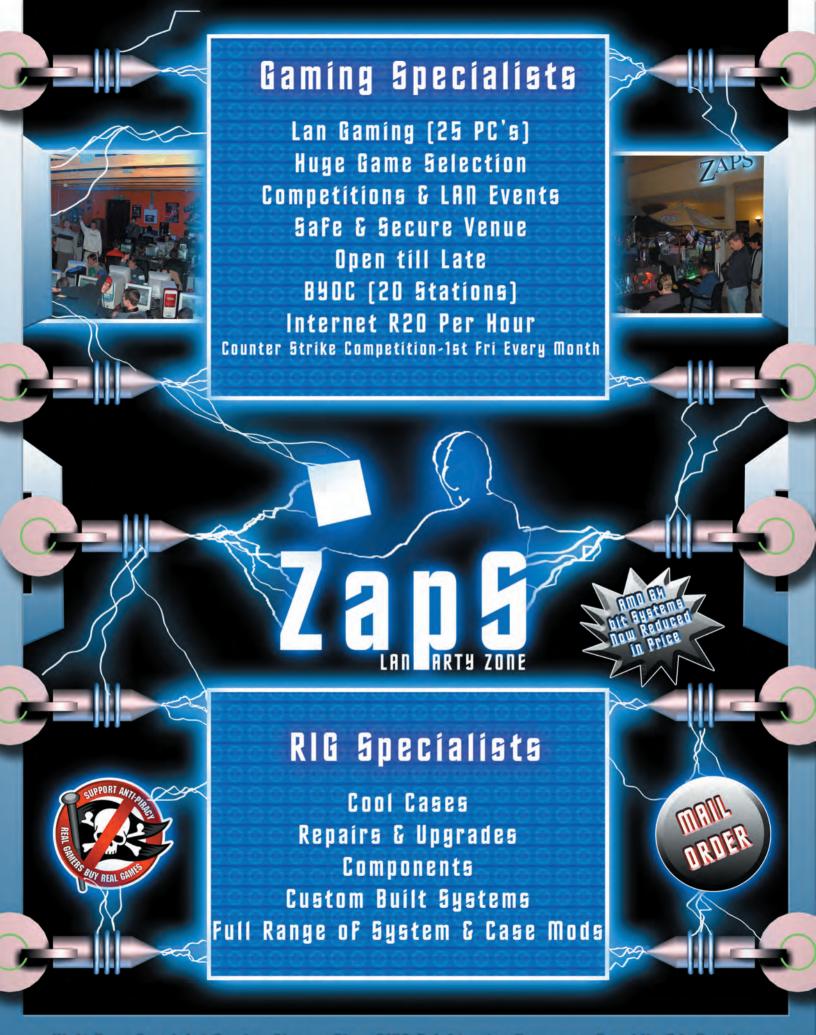
Newton's Wake takes place in the far future in a time after Earth was engulfed by sentient Al war machines. Space settlers and soldiers fled Earth and colonised the planet of Eurydice thinking they were the last survivors of mankind. It quickly becomes apparent that this was not the case as an expedition stumbles across a strange arte-

fact that sees the planet drawing the attention of many new arrivals.

Despite taking some time to get into the story, I enjoyed Newton's Wake. MacLeod offers enough interesting situations and peculiar ideas to keep the reader sticking with it to the end.

rice: R554.95 (excl. delivery)

Mike Shema and Bradley Johnson



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role-playing & card games.

world of darkness

When White Wolf announced that the World of Darkness series as players knew it would be scrapped, many role players sighed in frustration... what would happen to this beloved series of games once White Wolf stopped production of the titles?

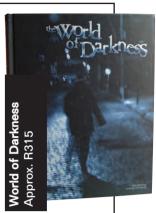
The answer to that question has arrived, and role players are quite exited by the prospect of this revamped system. Instead of reprinting rules time and again, the World of Darkness will now work with a core rule book and several expansions. This book, the first release of the renewed World of Darkness, is that core rule book.

Players of the previous World of Darkness titles (Vampire, Werewolf, Mage, Wraith and Changeling) will notice a number of differences. The system has been stripped down and simplified, and there is now an improved sense of unity implied for the rest of the series. This unity has basis in the fact that the basic rules represented in this book provide concrete and competent guidelines for playing normal humans,

which we never had before. In essence, normal humans form the basis of the game, and the dread creatures made playable by the expansions are built from that point.

A simpler dice system, fewer (but more useful) skills and a revamped combat system are all here, making World of Darkness one of the slickest and enjoyable role playing titles around. The book is beautifully finished in a sturdy matt cover with selective "spot" varnishing. Internal artwork is high quality and suits the mood of the game perfectly.

An additional plus is that players can now take the part of normal humans in a world controlled by monsters - making for great horror role playing.



world of darkness

This first expansion on White Wolf's World of Darkness reintroduces us to the world of Vampires - but much has changed since Vampire: The Masquerade.

New clans and bloodlines offer the player far more choice when generating a character, while the introduction of Covenants (replacing the Camarilla and Sabbat of old) allows for a greater degree of political intrigue.

Because the game requires the World of Darkness core rule book to play, there are very few rules within this beautifully made book. In fact, the only rules present are modifications to existing rules, where the game system needs to be applied to Vampiric characters. These new rules are different from older Vampire products

in that they are in line with both the new overall rule system, and the new structures within vampiric society. It is a complete and complex work, detailing virtually everything a gaming group would need to know to get a long term game of Vampire going. The changes to both the rule system and the universe are sweeping and brilliant, resulting in a game that will thrill fans and newcomers alike.

A quick FYI here: White Wolf is not resurrecting the entire World of Darkness series. Wraith, Changeling and Hunter have fallen by the wayside. Additional planned releases for this new series include Werewolf: The Forsaken and Mage: The Awakening.



duelmasters

Based on the popular Japanese manga of the same name, Duelmasters is a new trading card game aimed at younger players but enjoyable to all ages none the less. It works in a very similar way to Magic: The Gathering, but its rules allow for a simpler, more flowing game.

The artwork used on the Duelmasters cards is exceptionally good, and has a completely "uniform" feel. This is probably because the game is still comparatively in its infancy, without the myriad of expansions that plague Magic: the

Gathering available.

Duelmasters is a great way to get into Trading Card Gaming, and provides a breath of fresh air to those who already play. The game is very easy to learn and has an uncomplicated feel about it - although complex strategies are still possible within the confines of the game. Beautiful art and a wide range of collectable Premium "foil" cards add to the collection value of the game.







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comics.

Trail of the Gun DC Comics R46.95



Everyone knows that super heroes don't carry guns.

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Here's a story to explain it all to you; a prize of two million dollars is offered to the thief who can find and steal the world's ultimate gun. Although she's a thief, Catwoman doesn't use guns, but she wants the chance to prove she's queen of the thieves. When she is seen leaving the scene of the crime, with the gun in her hands, she gets blamed for the large number of dead men in the room she just left. This is her tale of events to a reporter, as she tries to prove her innocence.

Sylvia Faust Image Comics R23.50



Sylvia uses magic. This is a large part of Sylvia's problem with the world - she's not meant to use magic. People keep trying to prevent her from using it, all for the good of keeping those who use magic secret from those who don't. Now Sylvia lives in New York. Her housemate and mentor wants her to get a job, and blend with society... which is not as easy as you would think, when you are headstrong, teenage, and a powerful sorcerer. Telesales get out of hand when you magically make everyone buy from you. And when you meet the obnoxious driver, well, you get the idea...



JNAngel okyopop 90.95 Here's a manga story for the girls, as well as the guys. It is the story of a young schoolboy who is in love with one of his classmates. Of course, as is the nature of good manga, as soon as the poor boy has feelings for a girl he turns into "Dark," the shadow thief.

The thief is in love with the twin sister of Riku, the love of our hero. The thing is, whenever Dark gets interested in her, he turns back into Daisuke the innocent schoolboy.

This one is full of all sorts of confused relationships, as well as crime and violence.

And just to really round out the situation, what happens when a partial transformation gets Dark's personality stuck in Daisuke's body?



iz Iz Graphics Axil is a girl commanded by her brother to protect a magic book, called Riot. Billy the kid is a thief who wants to steal the book.

When Axil shoots Billy the book makes a deal to spare his life. All he has to do is protect Axil. It seems like a fair deal at the time, after all, it's better than being dead, right?

Besides, Axil is pretty cute. It's only when he has to live with her he realizes how hard it can be - that and there are rather a lot of other people who want the book too; church fanatics, thieves, just about everyone has a different belief about what they will get out of owning the book. To top it off Billy made some enemies in his last life. They don't care about the book, they just want him dead.

raphic novel

The two biggest badasses in comic history had to meet. In fact they didn't do it once - they did it three times. Now all the meetings between Judge Dredd, the ultimate Lawman, and Batman, super vigilante, are collected into one graphic novel. With stunning artwork by Simon Bisley and Glenn Fabry, this is a hardcore work of sex and violence... not for kiddies or the squeamish. This is dark horror at its best, with just a twist of humour to keep the world bizarre and off-course - just the way it should be.

Batman Judge Dredd Files DC/ 2000AD



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- 1 MySQL database
- Control panel



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board games.

lord of the rings risk (trilogy edition)

As stated before, board games are beginning to follow trends set by other entertainment media. Where once upon a time a movie was based on a board game (meaning Clue, of course) we now have a board game based on a movie. One could argue that Lord of the Rings Risk Trilogy Edition is based on the books, but the imagery and feel of the game comes straight out of Peter Jackson's three films. With rules based on the old classic Risk, this game is none the less a more complex and entertaining version of its predecessor. The use of cards is a major change to the way

Risk works as well as the imposition of a "time limit." This limit is determined by the path of the One Ring, which makes its way across the board according to a set route. Once it reaches Mount Doom, the game is over. Additionally, the game is restricted to a maximum of four players. Lord of the Rings Risk Trilogy Edition is a beautifully finished game, with well modelled playing pieces, gorgeous cards and an overall impressive presentation. Give it a try - its classic board game strategy at its hestl

Approx. R459 (incl.



runebound

Just like computer games, board games are starting to cross genre boundaries with gay abandon. Once a quest space has been reached, the game turns into something of a card game. These cards are used to determine if the player is successful or not. Beating a quest will result in character growth, as well as treasure rewards. And so the game progresses until one player becomes the ultimate hero of the lands. Runebound is an incredibly inter-

esting game in terms of concept, and is great fun to play. The random element brought into the game through the use of cards keeps things interesting, and the experience induced growth of characters makes the game exciting throughout the play time. This is a great board game for those who want to try something different, and who enjoy the prospect of adventures and hidden treasures within their games.

pprox. R459 (incl. shipping)



Supplied by www.boardgames.co.za

strategy guides.



With great power comes a cliché opening line and a strategy guide to make sure you don't have too much responsibility. Bradygames has yet to disappoint with their strategy guides, and they're not about to start with their Spider-Man 2 Strategy Guide. Possibly the best part of the whole package, is the massive, highly detailed New York city map that shows you every Hint Marker, Challenge, Secret Tokens and more. Also, each of the bosses is explained in detail with tactics on how to defeat them while the character bios and combat upgrade explanations give you all the background you could want. Overall, a typical high-quality guide from Bradygames.

If you own more than one console, this book contains cheats for PlayStation, PlayStation 2, Game Boy Advance, Xbox and GameCube. Finding cheats is easy enough, though the book could have benefited from colour-coding each platform's section. If you want cheats and don't have internet connectivity, this book is the next best thing.





Don't want to look for cheat codes online? The PS2 Secret Codes 2004 Volume 2 contains cheats for most of the current line of PlayStation 2 games and a few older titles. The book's lettering is large and easy to read although the large font makes it seem as if the book doesn't contain cheats for many games.

> Available from Pearson Education at itminds@pearsoned.co.za



Ex Astris Scientia

www.ex-astris-scientia.org
While some think the franchise is breathing its last breath, others are still fanatic about Star Trek, including this fellow - who compiled an entire site about the universe the cult show takes place in - and we mean everything. From episode and character guides to manuals on ships and planets, technology, fan fiction and even model kits, all wrapped up in a nice, easy design, it might seem a bit obsessive to some, but at least it's a job very well done.



Hello Kitty Laptop http://www.exonome.com/fj/p hkl/

No, not a site on someone's laptop that they bought in Japan (there are even Hello Kitty taxis in the Far East). Instead, someone decided to go the one garish step further and mod their mobile PC to a Hello Kitty theme - complete with pink fur (even the mouse is covered). That said, this was the work of two female fans and it was a gift, plus it looks good, so if you ever need to give a more unique gift to someone in love with pink or Hello Kitty (same thing, really), bookmark this site and get out your safety scissors.

Mozilla.org

http://www.mozilla.org

The browser world used to be divided between Internet Explorer and Netscape, until the former gained a lot of ground and the latter decided to release the Mozilla engine used in Netscape to the world. The result meant lots of smaller Mozilla-style browsers popping up everywhere, but a few quality options also arrived, including the very popular Firefox. Since the official Mozilla site (and home of Firefox) has been given a sleek overhaul, it's a good excuse to mention this browsing alternative.



Casemods.co.za

www.casemods.co.za

Pop into any medium size LAN locally and you're guaranteed to see a range of modded cases, spanning from off-the-shelf options with a few lighted fans all the way through to obsessive re-creations of the Deathstar (okay, we haven't seen that yet, but we'd like to). It's a growing scene within gaming and local site Casemods is all about supporting and growing this local market. Apart from selling the hardware you'd need to get started, they also have frequent reviews on mods and giveaways

for the best case mods submitted to the site.



Pixelito

http://pixelito.reference.be

And the award for the smallest helicopter in the world goes to... Pixelito!

Dwarfed by a hamster next to it, this tiny flying device only weighs 6.9 grams, including the battery used to power it. And it works perfectly, responding to a remote control. The site details how the chopper was made and also details other projects to make the world's smallest flying machine. It's amazing what a person can do using one strand of wire...



Flash Spotlight

The Matrix Still Has You

The Matrix might have come and gone, but that doesn't mean people can't still have fun with it. Most are a miss, but this compilation of Matrix parody skits have some real gems (especially the Subway one). Taking scenes and sometimes sounds from the movie, various writers and artists poke fun at the trilogy, including the Siege scene from the third film. And as a neat touch, the creators also included a control panel to pause the movies or go back to the presentation's menu.





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Disney's Aladdin [1994]

Perry [Shiny founder] and his team cut their teeth on. They also it was really good, so much so that Disney's platform titles just showed off their skills because despite being a movie spin-off franchise they had – and Aladdin comes from that generation. There was a time when Disney pumped out games on every Although not a Shiny game, it is one of the first titles Dave kept following its formula for a while.



has had the finger of most of the original Shiny team in it. Based on the 7-Up mascot, it was a marketing game to promote the brand, making for an average and easy, Another non-Shiny game, it still remains a classic and but fun, side-scrolling game.



achievement for a title that features an Earthworm in a space suit.

A solid sequel, it kept Shiny on the map.

If you build it and they come, you have to build a sequel. The second game featured an even-more bizarre plot, which is an

Earthworm Jim 2 [1995]

Messiah [2000]

To some a hit, others a miss, Messiah starred a small Cherub who goes to Earth to stop Satan. mix of action, tactical play and some strange His power – to leap into any body he wishes. Still, it gathered a select cult following for a Ahead of its time, Messiah had an awkward skinning that made some characters wobble.



space suit and complimentary ray gun and why he's out to go meet the princess. But this twisted little platform title opened earthworm ended up in a high-powered be pointless to wonder exactly how an doors for Shiny when they launched it You know, with characters like Queen Slug-for-a-Butt in this game, it might their debut titlel.



Sacrifice [2000]

represented by five gods, and choose to ally with world was destroyed, you arrive in this new land, Hands-down their most under-appreciated game, thus growing more powerful. As a wizard whose Sacrifice involved gathering souls for your God, one, giving him souls in exchange for power.



Enter The Matrix [2003]

Despite all that, though, another one is already in A miss with critics, though the game sales show that the public thought otherwise, even if it was ust the brand. Lambasted for poor controls, the blamed on the turmoil the project experienced. first Matrix game was considered a low point for Shiny by many gamers, but that could be

arrived (some say it stands for Murder Death Kill, others Max, Dr. Fluke Hawkins Earth and you need to stop them – by freefalling onto the carriers and destroying everything in them. Weapons such as the sniper helmet and the World's Smallest and Kurt, but Shiny never gave an explanation – apparently not even the design team can agree). In short, several alien mining operations are on their way to Just when we thought all Shiny could think about were zany worms, MDK Nuclear Bomb help you out in one of the best action-shooters made – ever.



decade now. Besides, you have to thank them for MDK and Earthworm Jim, the craziest character there's always Enter the Matrix... ahem, cough. developer has been making games for over a Shiny hasn't been at its prime of late, but this concept yet to hit Western games ... but then

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MAKING MONEY



Are game companies exploiting the market? Do we actually care?

You have to wonder about the gaming industry as it stands in this day and age... There are phenomena taking place through the industry that leads one to thinking: "Has the industry arrived at the point where the spirit of gaming is making a hasty retreat out through the back door?"

Amidst companies buying other companies, suing each other and going bankrupt, gaming is going through quite a shake-up, and the trend doesn't look set to change. And right at the end of the chain sits little Willy the Average Gamer, bearing the brunt of game cancellations and release delays because of the big business attitude that has sprung up in the industry. Is this the way the gaming industry should be run? Shouldn't we return to the days of nigh-underground development teams producing products for the love of it, instead of for the big pay packet?

The answer to that one, in my mind, is a resounding and unequivocal NO! The fact that gaming has become big business does nothing but benefit the industry as a whole, which means that little Willy is ending up with a better product at the end of the day - if he's a triple A buyer, of course.

Yeah, many gamers are whining about the Big Bad Business Wolf gobbling up the industry, but, quite frankly, they a) don't know anything about life b) are too self-involved to see the big picture and c) are just plain stupid. The plain fact is that because of big business and the inherent competition within that kind of structure, we are seeing an increase in the quality of games made available to the consumer. This is a basic principle of a free market system, folks, so live with it. If you don't like it, go start a hippie-communist-gamer commune on some island and see how long you last when you realize that no-one thought to bring a can opener...

The rest of us will learn that there is a huge amount of benefit from a big business approach.

And as for the "spirit of gaming?" Well, it's just that. A ghost. A phantasm. It never existed, simply because the potential for moneymaking always existed around the core concepts of game creation. The fact that people are benefiting from providing good games to the consumer is great because, let's be honest - the more money they make, the more money they want to make. And in order to make more money, they need to make better games. That suits me just fine, thanks.

A MAGGING SUSPICION 2 art & words by Walt Pretorius WHY ARE ALL THE LIGHTS OUT? WELL, IT'S PART OF PRIEST'S NEW STRESS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM ... HE WAS PLAYING CALL OF DUTY: UNITED OFFENSIVE, AND DESPITE HIGH LEVELS OF FRUSTRATION, HE DIDN'T BREAK A SINGLE KEYBOARD! YEAH? YEAH, HE BLEW UP AN ELECTRICAL SUBSTATION INSTEAD...

Disclaimer: It's November, we're tired and besides you can't expect us to come up with something clever here every month... Right



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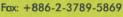
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